ARGUMENT OF BOOK I.

The subject proposed. Invocation. The poem opens at the period, when the Danes under the command of the three Kings Guthrun, Oskital, and Amund suddenly broke their treaty of peace, confirmed by the most holy vows, and stormed the English camp at Wareham. This perfidy is instigated by the demons who are adverse to the cause of Christianity. The battle is represented, as at midnight, wherein the whole army of Alfred being routed, England is on the brink of ruin. At this critical moment, the angels meet in the sky, and after a conference, agree to terrify the superstitious Danes, by a omen from their Reafen or magical standard. This is effected, and the Danes cease to pursue the defeated English, proposing to retire to Exeter. Satan is inflamed with fury, and appearing in the clouds, threatens revenge. Dawn. The English army re-assembles. Alfred being wounded is conducted to his tent by his officers. His Queen here attends him. Alfred addresses the army. Then to discover the loss sustained, he proposes that the whole shall pass before him in review.

ALFRED.

BOOK I.

V. 1—19.

ALFRED, whose battles and successive toils
Freed from the conquest of the Danish foe
His ravag'd country, claims the grateful Muse.
He many turns of varying fortune knew
On earth, on ocean: him th' infernal pow'rs
Ceaseless oppos'd, yet vainly, for the chief
By valour as by counsel, Heav'n his friend,
Wrought England's peace, and plann'd her future weal.

Come then, thou airy queen of ev'ry Muse,
Imagination; in thy right-hand lead
The nymph of graver mien, Historic Truth.
Attend me thus, and as the voice compos'd
Of thy sedate companion may reveal
Her calm and gradual tale, sudden do thou
Catch from her lips the feeble sounds; expand
Her faint ideas into thousand forms
Of glowing images; uplift the veil
That shades her darken'd heroes from the day,
And in thy own bright colours bid them shine.

Or deign, immortal spirit, thee I call
Still to my aid, who from thy glorious sphere
Descending, didst inspire that sightless bard
With sacred raptures; him, tho' blind and dark,
To whose capacious vision thou could'st ope
Dread scenes of warring angels, heav'n's bright realms,
The vast profound of hell, creation's seeds
In chaos lost and night, earth in her prime
Of youthful grace, with her first habitants
Fall'n thro' deep wiles of their rebellious foe;
Thou, from Seraphic altars who could'st bring
Flame to the hallow'd tongue, prompt thence to pour
Grand utterance, suited to sublimest themes;
Deign, high instructress, at still hours of peace,
Duly as eve leads on her welcome shades,
Me too to visit. Touch me with a spark
Of that prophetic fire, the birth of heav'n,
(Nor without honour there) what may suffice
T' illume this visual ray and fit my tongue,
Thy votary, for this its humbler theme.
Suffer me, Goddess, at thy awful blaze
To light my feeble torch, which then shall shew
To Britain's sons, with ray that may endure
To future times, their fathers' deeds; shall thus
Display her heroes in else-dying verse,
And with deserved honours deck their names.

Tell then, what sudden impulse mov'd the Danes,
Often magnanimous, and now at last
By Alfred's arms reduc'd to leagues of peace,

So soon to violate their plighted faith,
By holiest oaths confirm'd; and while both hosts,
Encamp'd by Wareham's walls, indulg'd awhile
In games, and tournaments, and festal joys,
To rush to midnight war?
Th' infernal pow'rs:
Who hop'd by this so sudden fraud to gain
Instant their purpos'd end; bent to destroy
The Christian light, with its attendant train
Of peace, and arts, and knowledge, order, laws,
And social commerce, now throughout the land
Dawning with early beams; and to restore
The ancient reign of darkness.
Thus impell'd,
Since Britain's Chief had bound the foe to yield
To his own sway the desolated land,
Hell's train had breath'd into the Pagan race
Ardor insatiate for fresh deeds of death;
Till at the silent midnight hour, their host
Perfidious mov'd to fight. Veil'd in thick clouds
Hurl'd down by potent hands of beings evil
Hov'ring aloft amid the shadowy sky,
Swift they approach'd, full soon from end to end
Storming the British camp, while in alarm
The universal host all-wild convenes,
Unnumber'd banners thro' the sable air
Waving obscure, as crowds confus'd around
Mingle in dim array and squadrons rude.
The heroes gird themselves and frighted steeds
Caparison in haste, amid the roar

V. 48—78.

Of war's dread signals and the dismal shrieks
Of frantic wives and infant families,
Matrons rever'd, and priests, and hoary age,
Forth issuing from the tents, a helpless throng,
Flying for refuge, terrified. And now
Three dire successive hours th' infuriate Danes
Hold the dread conflict, and in deeds of blood
Riot o'er all the camp, their savage rage
Glutting in carnage and unsated death.
Night adds her aid and terrors. Over heav'n
Darkness unusual broods. Lo! in the east
The broad and radiant moon hath veil'd her orb,
Eclips'd, and all her vanish'd train of stars
Shed not a ray to pierce the murky pall
Of thick infernal gloom from sky to sky
O'erhung by fatal pow'rs unseen. And hark!
Horribly yet the shock of charging hosts
And din of battle thro' the vault of heav'n
Tremendous rolls. Under the madden'd tread
Of moving legions, all the tented plain
Trembles from end to end, while host with host,
Join'd in close conflict, outrage and uproar
Boundless provoke, confus'd in hideous dark.
Steeds over groaning steeds and trampled heaps
Of heroes plunge thro' blood. The burden'd air
Roars universal with commingled noise
Of clanging armour, battle-axes swung
And pow'rful scymitars on helms and shields,
Shatter'd with tumult. Deep groans dismal blend
Of warriors dying, numberless outstretch'd

O'er the wet earth, amid their shiver'd arms,
Banners, and prostrate tents, and friends, and foes.
Shouts mix of band from band invoking aid; V. 108—136.
Pagans, innumerous rushing, sternly call
Gods to descend and view their mighty deeds.
Bards thro' each host raise loud the songs of war
(Familiar records of their fathers' fame)
And from the lab'ring strings of thousand harps
Wake martial music, the transported soul
Swelling to highest valour. Shrieking shrill
Close on the verge of battle, Danish wives,
Virgins, and prophetesses, (deem'd divine)
Fierce as the race of men, their piercing cries
Upsend, and urge with threats their wounded sires,
Husbands and lovers, still to new assaults,
Price of their love and favor of the Gods,
While thousands sink around. For underneath
The dread tempestuous show'rs, each following each,
Javelins, and arrows, stones, and sever'd rocks
Hurl'd from gigantic arms, that thro' the sky,
Viewless, in loud commotion ever flew,
What mortal force might stand? Whole squadrons fall,
Dash'd down like forests from the mountain sides,
Struck by heav'n's bolts. Death reigns unseen, uncheck'd,
And Desolation pleas'd, o'er all the camp
With proud step stalking, by the hand leads on
Horror and mad Confusion. Pois'd in air
Aloft, the Demons at their full success
Exalted, on the deathful scene look down
With horrid malice, and, to high thoughts rais'd,

Glory aloud; as when amid the sky
Thunders deep-rolling crash, and mix all heav'n
In fiery storm. V. 156—168.

Throughout the English host
The shouting chieftains their retiring pow'rs
Vainly exhort to rally, and sustain
Again th' unequal shock of war. O'er all
Supreme, far-echoing o'er the plain, the voice
Of Alfred, England's shield and single hope,
Resounds, as borne upon his foaming steed
He bursts thro' thickest uproar, ev'ry Chief
Calling by name, and ev'ry yielding rank
Heartening to stand, and shrink not, ere the tide
Of battle veer, and victory tho' late
Arrive propitious. Vain the Monarch's words:
For terror, and despair, the manliest hearts
O'erwhelm; himself, the sov'reign chief, ere this
Wounded by unknown hands, his anguish keen
Felt not, or scorn'd to feel, tho' from his side
Blood-currents streaming stain'd his mailed limbs.
His noble soul, was firm, collected, cool,
In direst danger.

But ah! vain his skill,
Vain ev'ry effort courage to renew
Amid the fainting troops; for now forc'd rout
And flight precipitate his total host
Usurps, and urges from th' embattled plain
Aghast and terrified, while close behind
On full-expanded steeds in mad pursuit
Th' insatiate Pagans with horrific shouts,

Louder than ocean swell'd in mountain waves,
Pronely descend; a tempest, flashing flames
Wide-blazing from innumerable swords,
Wav'd in defiance proud wherever eye
Might turn, as on they come in fierce career,
Fir'd all with fix'd resolve the routed host
In universal carnage to o'erwhelm,
And win full empire o'er the total land.
What shall be done? Immediate ruin threats,
And final devastation all the realm
Of England, friendless, hopeless, unretriev'd.

This knew full well, this saw with meet alarm
Th' immortal pow'rs of heav'n; blest sons of light,
Who from th' empyreal courts their airy way
Voyaging erst to Britain's favor'd isle,
Arriv'd her guardians 'gainst the hell-born arts
Of Satan's legions, maddening to o'erwhelm
Her founded glory. Now delay is none,
Ere high above the sense of mortal ear
Throughout the wide ætherial concave rings
With pow'r th' angelic trumpet, whose known sound
Summons the states celestial to wont place
Of council. Strait amid the sea of air
The watchful essences, on buoyant wings
Expansive floating thro' the clouds of night,
Haste to the destin'd region of the sky
Where underneath the topmost azure cope
Beside the starry pole, irradiant stood,
In circling range immense of splendid pomp,

Chariots of gold, the glorious work of heav'n,
Like thrones, self-pois'd on gorgeous wheels. Afar
Night vanish'd all-around, aw'd at the sight,
And curb'd her sullen shades, such fulgent rays
Shot from the thousand gems and living gold,
Brighter than sunbeams o'er the fields of spring,
When morning gilds the world. Here entering soon,
Within their wide pavilion, in array
Appear'd th' angelic squadrons; and at once
His throne magnific each ascends, then seen
In the full glory of celestial state,
Their spreading wings bedropp'd with gold, and zones
Cerulean beaming various-colour'd light;
While thro' their martial mien apparent shone
Mercy and love predominant, with form
Mild of divinest beauty. Marshall'd now
Beneath their star-rich canopies, to these,
From his resplendent seat majestic rose
Michael their arch-angelic Chief, whose port
Kingly, and hand poising his flamy spear
Outstretch'd, bespoke attention, while these words
Pour'd from his lips divine drew ev'ry ear.

"Synod of heav'n, to whose protective care
Th' ALL-GOOD SUPREME consigns yon favor'd isle,
Now see we the fall'n angels' subtle arts
Prevailing, and in unsuspected blood
Drenching her plains. Still fervently they long,
(Nor ever will their dreadful fury end)
Truth and religion, whose whole breath is peace,

But late throughout these regions proud to rear
Yet tott'ring altars, from these heav'n-blest shores
Eternally to chase, and in their stead
Plant Pagan doctrines, and belief in Gods
Fabled, yet trust in whom we see possess
Men's hearts with quenchless thirst for war and blood.
Mocking at peace and all the softer arts
Of humble virtue and domestic life,
These place sole greatness, worth, and high renown
In death and slaughter; and proclaim the meed
Of joys eternal to such madden'd men
As on the bloody field their blooming lives
Yield to their warlike gods, denouncing stern
Horrible, endless torments after death
To all who in ignoble quietude
Die, aged, or at home. This horrid faith
Well-suits the curst designs of heaven's grand foe,
Lab'ring to stablish wickedness and wars
Among mankind, thence surely to increase
His own dread empire, and hell's boundless realms
People with fiends, his subjects. Therefore still
He burns to crush the gradual-rising pow'r
Of that religion, breathing love, revealed
In mercy down from heav'n, to civilize
And make men happy, while it gently shews
Whate'er is truly good and fair, and bids
Their earth be like our heav'n, so that ev'n here,
In this frail bud of being, fallen man
Mindful may gain and keep habits of good,
And thus may qualify the soul divine

V. 226.—256.

Which fills and animates his fleshly frame,
Ev'n here to know, and knowing to enjoy
Goodness, and therefore happiness. Whence still
Delighting in her habits, after death,
(Man's primal doom) that soul may fit become
As one of us; with us, (blest more and more
As nearer we approach and suffer'd know
HIM SOLE, THAT GREAT SUPREME, fountain of good)
May range immortal through heaven's blissful climes
And all creation's worlds, age after age,
Unceasing, and in extacies of joy
Adoring see his works, and execute
His high behests. This knows th' arch-enemy,
Who therefore with malignant hatred views
Yon hero, great and good, on England's plains
Toiling to save her sons from tyrant sway
And Pagan slavery; not thro' lust of pow'r,
Or mad ambition, but whose gen'rous soul
TH' ALMIGHTY MIND has deign'd t'illume with rays
Divine of knowledge, with capacious views
Of his own nature, and whate'er can form
Man's bliss below. Hence 'tis the chieftain burns
By humanizing arts and union sweet
Of social comforts, to refine and bless
His country, rude as yet and unrestrain'd;
And on the base of true religion, law,
And commerce, found an empire for her sons,
Which to succeeding ages shall dispense
Peace, science, happiness. His cares shall raise
England to height of manners, wealth, and pow'r.

V. 256—286.

Now therefore since we see the hellish league
Prevalent, lest they gain their utmost wish,
Resistless pouring o'er the conquer'd land,
Behoves us to descend, and swift restrain,
As best we may, yon horrible pursuit,
Rousing by prodigies the ominous awe
And rev'rent superstition of the foe,
Till retrograde he turn, and cease at length
To steep in blood yon carcase-cover'd plain."

He spoke, and thro' the vast assembly rose
Th' applausive music of their golden shields,
Which struck by thousand quiv'ring spears sent forth
Sonorous harmony, portending deeds
Of valourous worth. Nor longer here they rest,
But 'mid the clouds of night, seen far below
Rolling fuliginous, down plunge they all
On outspread wings impetuous,—when, behold!
With next t' almighty arm, they tear the web
Of Stygian gloom, and thro' th' aërial hall
Chase the thick shades of darkness, cloud on cloud
Heap'd awful, to th' horizon's utmost bound.
Swift o'er the blue-revealing, starry sky
Light universal beams: the broad, full moon
Bursts sudden forth; but gloomy-red appear'd
Her face, reflecting from the purpled earth,
Whereon she gaz'd aghast, the hue of blood.
Then to the shrinking eye was first disclos'd
The dreadful field of death, where slaught'rous war
Still rag'd o'er dead and dying, and the camp

Prostrate. In full pursuit the madden'd Danes,
Under their thousand banners moving fast,
Gaze upward, startled at the sudden light,
While the faint English, flying swift, dispers'd,
Lift their despairing eyes, wherein some gleam
Flash'd now of distant hope, as back they look
Astonish'd.

Lo! amid the Danish host
Th' archangel has arriv'd, where, high upborne,
Blaz'd like a comet 'mid the turbid air
Their mighty standard, to the watchful moon
Waving its gleamy bulk, horrent with gold.
Apparent in the midst, as if alive,
The pictur'd raven stood, by fated hands
Of royal virgins wove with magic rites,
Breath'd to avenge a murder'd father's blood.
Now black it stood and vast, rearing aloft
Its sable form terrific, with keen eye
Seeming to scan the deeds of hosts below;
Far-seen with awe by all the sons of war,
Wherever helms on helms in long array
A shadowy splendour cast, as ocean waves
Subsiding, when the tempests, thunder-wing'd,
Have torn their watry beds. Lifted it mov'd
By valiant chosen hands, inclos'd around
By solemn priests and virgin prophetesses,
Skill'd to expound its ever-varying shape,
While near on all sides round, favor'd of kings,
For its protection throng'd the choicest war.
Touch'd by the angel's hand invisible,

Behold! the imag'd bird, omen of fate,
With living motion seiz'd, in sight of all
Droops its sunk head: down fall its shudd'ring wings, V. 345—374.
And hide its pendent crest: tott'ring it drops,
Prone to the pictur'd ground, faint as in death.

Immediate from the victor host arose
Shrieks horrible of terror and dismay,
Filling heaven's concave: shouts and cries succeed,
That stun all ears. Lo! wond'rous to relate,
Suddenly stops the universal mass
In height of victory; nor the hot pursuit
Nor lust of battle claims one wand'ring thought.
Sole tow'rd the awful omen each man bends
His total soul. Forth from their thousand bands
In trembling consternation furious spring
Kings, leaders, chiefs; Guthrun and Oskital,
And Amund, mighty warriors! Hubba there,
And Hinguar, brothers of the fatal three
Who wove the dreadful ensign: issuing flew
Frena and Sidroc, potent Thanes; with these
Names other, known to fame, in battailous deeds
Tried and renown'd, too num'rous to recount.
Thronging all hasten tow'rd the mystic sign,
There to consult the heav'n-inspired dames,
Daughters of kings, with holy awe rever'd;
Eager from their unerring lips to learn
What means this dread portent, and high decree
Of their offended Gods. To these the maids
With hands uplifted and cheeks saintly-pale,

And eyes, full-streaming, in deep transport rapt,
Rais'd tow'rd the sacred ensign, give response.—

V. 374—401.

" All further battle and pursuit must end.
On these the Gods now unpropitious frown.
So Odin, God of war, heaven's awful king,
And Frea, his great spouse, who shares the slain,
And Thor, their son, the God of thunder, doom."—

This heard, strait all resolve to send around
Heralds to every leader, bearing charge
To cease pursuit; counsel to which each chief
Willing assented; all, save Oskital,
Dread tyrant, fierce in rapine as in blood.
He, swelling with indignant rage to hear
Battle and plunder now must end, with frowns
Vented the gloomy purpose of his soul.

" Why, thro' false terrors of offended Gods,
Forego we our advantage, nor o'erwhelm
The foe, and stablish here perpetual reign?
Losing the fair occasion now to seize
Alfred, our constant pest, and to our Gods
Offer him, victim proud: sure now to gain
Spoil endless. Possibly this dire portent,
Wrongly interpreted, may yet allow
Further pursuit. Th' insatiable Gods
Never can bid us stay the slaught'ring arm
In height of victory! Or if we dissent,
Sending more souls to Odin and his fates,

He will forgive, and ev'n the bold emprize
Approve, and deem us heroes fit to share
His awful presence, and with glorious meeds
Of partial favor honor us in heav'n.
Follow we then, nor longer cease from war."— V. 401—429.

Fir'd by his words, some stand in asking doubt,
Till Guthrun, king of men, their leader prime,
Sternly his thoughtful counsels thus declar'd:

" Impious! how ever canst thou hope to share
Valhalla's joys, and be with heroes rang'd,
Doom'd on that terrible great day to fight
The battles of the Gods, when all their foes,
Ascending from the nether worlds, shall meet
Amid the sky, bent to o'erwhelm their thrones,
And win dominion o'er the boundless heav'n?
How ever, disobedient! hope to scape
Niflheimer's torments, where unsated Death
Reigns through her dreary realms, dispensing souls
Of cowards and bad men, thro' dens and caves,
To dwell with famine, pain and misery?—
Forbear, and listen to the Gods' decree.
Let us revere the Gods, if 'tis their will
Pursuit must end: 'tis ev'n what warrior-souls
Might wish; for why should we pursue the foe
Defeated, and confus'd, and render'd thus
Unequal by so much? What could the bards
Sing of our valour, if we thus assail
A routed host? No: let them now regain

Their wonted strength, that soon we may be join'd
In fresh and frequent battles, learning thence
To stand intrepid amid fiercest war,
And die exulting on the bloody field:
Heroes, then worthy Odin, and to live
In his glad presence, with the deathless throng
Of heroes in Valhalla's palaces.
My soul proud sees the Gods forbid pursuit,
And for new wars reserve their favor'd sons.—
Call too to mind this our new-plann'd emprize;
Have we not late to Kenwulph sent command,
Our tributary king of Mercia's plains,
With all his host of vassals to appear
By Exham's walls, where soon our camp array'd
Easy shall win the fertile country round?
Therefore oppose not, but the will of fate
Observe, and what thy warrior-peers deem wise."

Struck by the king's rebuke, to them his thoughts
Amund, the third in pow'r, thus calm express'd.
"Oskital, hearken to the sovereign's words.
Tho' much for present battle and high deeds,
Pow'rful to send my name to future times,
My bosom longs,—yet what the Gods decree
I deem it best t' obey."
This counsel pleas'd.
Dissension none is heard, but high applause
Of Guthrun, as o'er heroes worthy well
To rule. Strait active heralds to each band
Are sent, commission'd from the sov'reign kings

To bid the legions sheath their gory swords,
And cease pursuit. Observant all obey.
And soon o'er all th' embattled field are seen
The Danish squadrons moving, deep-array'd
In close-form'd union for retiring march.
Their music loudly blew sounds of retreat;
Their armour, glistening in the lunar rays,
Toss'd to the fading light impetuous gleams:
All overhead rich-floating banners wav'd.
Magnific scene! filling th' astonish'd eye
From end to end of all the spacious plain;
Like some proud-tow'red city in a blaze,
When midnight veils her pomp, but flashing fast,
Rise thro' the smoky volumes, crimson-ting'd,
Numberless pyramids of dusky fire.
Thus they, in distance lessening, haughty drove
O'er tents and prostrate slain, trampling thro' blood.

V. 456—467.

This heart-afflicting, unexpected sight
Th' infernal pow'rs endur'd not, but to rage
Yielding loose sway, high mid the low'ring heav'n,
Where well he deem'd th' angelic squadrons met,
Satan forth issued, to their shudd'ring sight
Visibly present: shrin'd in sable clouds
And tempests rolling round, his form obscure
But half appear'd; his wildly-prominent limbs
Thro' darkness mov'd: seem'd crown'd his tow'ring head,
As o'er the clouds his billowy waving locks
Shook awful: from his lifted arm forth came,
Terribly vast, a shadowy spear outstretch'd,

Measuring the sky. Behind their furious King
Stood other dreadful forms. His mighty shape
In pow'r seem'd likest to Ceraunian Jove,
Match'd 'gainst his giant-foes, whose pride aspiring
To win the throne and sov'reignty of heav'n,
Heap'd Ossa on Olympus, when in fury
Forth issuing, shrouded amid gloomy fire,
His arm omnipotent unceasing launch'd
Tremendous thunders, pestilence and storms,
That tore the boundless-vaulted sky, and prone
Smote their insensate legions, while the God
Strode over prostrate hills, and in his wrath
Triumphant trampled on the monstrous brood.
Nor long the Demon-fury silent stay'd,
But in a voice, which to th' angelic ears
Itself seem'd peals of thunder, his proud vaunts
And swelling menaces thus fierce address'd.

" This is your work, vile servile ministers,
To save from utter ruin your lov'd land,
And stop th' exterminating, slaught'rous rout
Of your weak English, which I joy and boast
T' have plann'd and half perform'd. Nor shall you fail
Your present wish: I grant it to proceed.
But know, base-crouching slaves, that I, the spirit,
Before whose thund'ring arm you fled dismay'd
With terror in that heav'n, whose glories ll
Grieve not t' have lost, or want; know, I with all
My host, most horribly will be aveng'd
For this: inducing on your wretched land

Vengeance tenfold, ruin more ruinous,
Slaughter and desolation fiercer far,
Such as your timid thoughts never conceiv'd,
Insatiable, relentless, unfatigued;
Till here we stablish never-ending wars,
And banish hence yourselves, with that weak faith
Inspiring peace and meekness, fit alone
For spirits base as yours, which you still toil
To found among mankind, whence they may grow
Apt subjects of your own low-bending heav'n.
But ere long time revolves, the busy King
Destroy'd, whose anxious cares you eager watch,
We here shall firmly plant a nobler faith,
Feelings more fierce and manly, which may make
Men like ourselves, and fit with us to share
Our own illimitable, gloomy world,
To swell my throned state, and people hell
Thro' all her stormy realms and dark domains,
Where, thro' eternal ages, they may live
Fall'n as ourselves. Deem not that we intend
To suffer there alone, but to abridge,
Our utmost, your society and pow'r.
Henceforth then, war becomes my sole delight;
My glory, desolation. For with you
I'sdeign communion, but immortal hate
Still cherish, and ye know if ere my deeds
Prove weaker than my words. Wherefore expect
Acts answering to implacable revenge."

v. 516—451

Nor more; but in contempt th' infernal King

Turn'd, and retiring slow after him drew
The clouds immense, whose circling veil involv'd
His angry host, o'ershadowing in long arch
The Danish legions, as their glimm'ring ranks
Fast left the straining sight.
V. 545—572.

With horror struck,
Stood a brief space th' angelic bands, to hear
Those blasphemous words, pregnant with rooted ire;
Till soon recov'ring, their supernal Chief
To action meet recall'd their pond'ring thoughts.—

"Let us be calm and firm; nor fear these threats,
Ere we behold Hell's Monarch strive t' effect
What he forebodes; tho' from his rage malign
'Tis likely his dark vengeance may attempt
Some horrid schemes. But since the mad pursuit
Now ceases, we retiring may confer,
How best we may repair this mournful loss,
How best assist the sov'reign hero's toils,
Directing to the camp the flying bands;
Till, ere long space, the scatter'd host resume
Its wonted station: there observant watch
The prudent councils of the rallied chiefs,
Thus England's safety provident to gain,
And work her peace and lasting happiness."

Thus they; and, smooth-receding, all the air
Dropp'd with ambrosial fragrance, as with dews.

Now Dawn approach'd, and thro' the gates of light

Early apparent, while the glorious Sun
Ascending o'er the redden'd ocean-verge,
Follow'd with all his train of golden pomp,
She in her purple chariot high advanc'd,
Her forehead circled with the morning stars,
Rein'd with imperial hand her grey-wing'd steeds,
Serenely floating up the twilight heav'n.
While now the English bands scatter'd diverse
(The slaught'rous ruin ceasing, and the foe
Departed far) the remnant of their force
Collect, and back retrace their pensive way
Tow'rd the fall'n camp. Of these recov'ring first
The Sov'reign Monarch led his noble band;
Advancing at whose head, in martial state
Rode the great Chieftain; on his haughty steed
Whose tall plumes wav'd, as slow he pranc'd along,
He sat majestic: tow'ring high he bore
His manly front, half by his gold-bright shield
Envelop'd. Still undaunted and serene
Amid defeat, his looks awoke in all
Reviving hope. His right arm wielded firm
The massy lance, tho' his yet-bleeding wound
Throbb'd with keen anguish, and his glitt'ring limbs
Streak'd thick with clotted gore, to ev'ry eye
Told his late peril. Broad before-him shone
Th' imperial standard, in the winds of morn
Impatient tossing, 'mid whose radiant pomp,
Flaming with silky splendor gems and gold,
Th' emblazon'd lions glar'd, o'er all the field
Conspicuous turning, as the rustling gales

Shook their proud forms.
Behind the Monarch mov'd
Brilliant in arms, his chos'n attendant train, V. 602—621.
The flower of southern provinces, a throng
Martial in aspect, all well-skill'd to wield
The hostile spear. These following o'er the plain
In long procession, near their much-lov'd prince
With fonder ardor press, elate to view
The gallant Chief his wonted place resume.
Around their glitt'ring skirts, at distance due,
The princely tufas wav'd, on whose white staff
The various-colour'd plumes, nodding aloft,
Form'd a resplendent globe, to ev'ry heart
As life or honour dear, known from afar,
Royalty's ensign. Thus they pass'd along,
Cheer'd by the joyous sounds of music sweet,
A noble band, lessen'd, but num'rous still.
For in that dreadful fight, while thousand foes
Thrice with impetuous fury charg'd their ranks,
Thrice had the dauntless Monarch cheer'd his train
To stand the shock; then on the foe in turn,
Led by the King, who, fir'd with noble rage,
Seizing his banner, foremost with loud shouts
Rush'd terrible, had these in emulous zeal
Rapt to transporting frenzy, fierce advanc'd,
Following their Chief. Their desolating swords
Nought could resist: from their continuous edge
Whole legions fell, struck as by lightning fires,
Till thro' the carnag'd field to difficult life
And safe recess they wrought their wond'rous way.

Them following, Oddune came, the valiant chief
Of Devon's province, heading his tall train
Practis'd in war, whose darkly-waving locks
Shadow'd their brawny shoulders as they mov'd,
Intrepid courage in their stedfast looks.

V. 632—661.

Follow'd the vet'ran Herbert, whose long sway
Dorsetian valleys own'd, and sent their pow'rs
Banded beneath his rule, now marching on
In multitudinous ranks of warlike men,
Part seated high on foaming steeds, select
From hills and fertile plains; infantry part,
Whose sounding armour echoed as they strode
Untir'd, and eager for adventurous deeds
Of future war.
Osmund came next, the good
And noble leader of the banded troops,
The choice of Cornwall's fields; heroic throng,
Lov'd of the Monarch.
These with haste advance
To gain th' unpeopled camp. Nor long their course:
For soon their pow'rs, amid the fallen tents
And dismal vestiges of death, arrive.
Horrible scene! where hideous Ruin wide
Upheld her desolate reign, and every look
Congeal'd the shudd'ring heart.
The wounded King,
Held by his agitated Chiefs, repairs
Where late the regal tent conspicuous rose,
Soon entering mid the yet unfallen dome.

Strait on a broider'd couch that glitt'ring stood
Within the spacious canopy, they seat
The wearied Monarch, who his steely helm
Unlac'd, and o'er his paler face his locks
Fell dank. The heart-struck chiefs, with anxious care
Approaching rev'rent, wipe his chilly brows;
While others from the custom'd store forth reach
The cheering wine. The Monarch drank; but soon
His better thoughts recov'ring, with his chiefs
Confers his lab'ring purpose, bent to send
Heralds around to all the scatter'd troops
With charge to seek direct the fallen camp.
This counsel quick approv'd, some to their bands
Forth issue, and dispatch swift messengers,
Bearing the Sov'reign's high commands.
Return'd
Soon tow'rd the tent, lo! his beloved wife,
Elsweda, prime of women, honour'd Queen,
Her hair dishevell'd, her loose garments wild,
Eager enquiring for her much-lov'd spouse,
Accosts them at the threshold, follow'd strait
By her fair handmaid, bearing in her arms
The Monarch's infant son, the latest care
Of his fond mother. She no sooner hears
Her husband safe, but 'mid the crowded tent
Enters. The chiefs bow rev'rent. She beheld
Aghast, with pale surprise and countenance ope,
Him, her lov'd husband, on the couch reclin'd,
Pallid and faint, his armour frequent stain'd
With streamy gore. Recov'ring, she approach'd

Tender, and taking soft his hand, with looks
That spoke ineffable affection, hung
In silence o'er him, pressing on his lips
A fond and holy kiss. He mild receiv'd
Her kind caresses, grateful to his heart
As his own being, and with faint voice asks
Of her own safety;—of their children's weal.
With falt'ring tone she tells, that these are left
Safe in a distant tent, in anxious charge
Of his kind sister;—that her youngest care
Follows with her attendant.—But at sight
Of his pierc'd mail and wounded side, her voice,
In trembling agitation, stops: she bends,
And with her flowing garment gently clears
The clotted blood, exerting now, as wont,
Her art, the pride of noble women, here
The sole physicians, emulous to heal
Their dear relations' oft-inflicted wounds:
Unbinds the twisted mail, with gentle touch
Deceives the throbbing anguish, and applies
The ready mixture of known styptic herbs,
Whose virtue can assuage and banish pain.
Thus, as the beauteous Queen her meekest care
Employ'd, soft-starting from her azure eyes,
Stream'd o'er her vermeil cheeks the graceful drops
Of love, by pity wak'd; each warrior's heart
Melting to silent sympathy. Her tears
Seem'd as when violets, (after stormy rains
Have drench'd the earth) shook by the winds of eve,
Smooth o'er their blue leaves roll the brilliant drops,

V. 691—721.

Left in their balmy cups, and wide disperse
Their liquid fragrance o'er the freshen'd ground.
As thus assiduous by his side she lean'd,
The Monarch, thoughtless of the rankling wound,
Or to divert its anguish, his lov'd child
Call'd to his arms, and soft-upbearing took
The tender burthen from the bending nurse;
Kiss'd the fair boy: his rosy-swelling cheek
Press'd fond, and in endearing accents spoke.
Smiling, the infant knew its father's voice,
Pleas'd, and extending soon its little hands,
Grasp'd fast his steel-girt neck; then in delight
Stretch'd o'er the shining mail, speckled with blood,
Its iv'ry fingers. At such sportive play
Of the fair innocent, th' admiring chiefs,
And father, tend'ring smil'd. Then thro' her tears
Uplooking lovely, all the mother's heart
Beam'd in her eyes, while a subduing smile
Illum'd her face, and check'd a rising sigh,
Sooth'd by th' endearments of the thoughtless babe.

V. 721—750.

The Monarch to his amiable spouse
Yields grateful thanks for this her fostering care,
And feels returning strength. Now to his chiefs
He opes his strong desire amid the troops
To pass, and view the ruins of the camp,
There to observe whate'er requir'd their care;
For well he deem'd his presence would diffuse
Courage thro' all, seen yet alive, nor lost
In that dire conflict.

Soon, amid the camp
And field of war arriv'd, heart-thrill'd they pause,
Seeing such ravage as no pen can paint,
Or tongue distinct relate. Ramparts destroy'd,
Tents overwhelm'd; wide over all the field,
Wherever eye could view, armour bestrown,
Gory and shatter'd; men and steeds commix'd,
Dying or dead; and o'er them frequent thrown
Torn standards, steep'd in blood.
With eager haste,
Pouring from ev'ry side, fresh bands arrive,
And o'er the plain with various view disperse;
Some to repair the prostrate mounds, some prompt
To raise, or form anew their shatter'd homes.

As on the chieftains pass, cries and laments
And frequent shrieks on ev'ry hand assail
Their ears, from many a wretched son upsent,
Finding his father pale and dead. Or where
Full many a tender wife, now widow'd, knelt
Fond o'er her fallen husband, cold in death.
There many a mother, starting in affright,
Thro' broad and ghastly wounds, scarce recogniz'd
Her youthful son, while o'er his shatter'd corse
She hung, and, clasping, kiss'd his dear remains,
Whelm'd in despair of grief. The loaded air
Resounds with various utt'rance of loud woe
In dismal discord. O'er their wounded friends,
Pallid, but yet alive, full many bend

V. 750—778.

Or raise them in their arms, while lifting soft
Their languid eyes, these breathe their latest life
Into the breast of those they love most dear. V. 778—807.
Matrons and virgins eager o'er the field
Exert their healing art, their dearest boast,
And sooth full many a wound, wash'd with their tears.
To deep compassion mov'd, the Sov'reign Chief,
Passing amid the mournful scene, full oft
Beholds, attended thus with pious care,
Some wounded hero, whose brave deeds he knew
And gratefully remember'd. Him he takes
Fond by the hand, bids him be of good hope,
Nor doubt recov'ry, till such soothing words
And mild engagements from the much-lov'd prince,
Draw from th' attend'red warrior, spite of pain,
A grateful tear, and o'er his speechless face
Spread smiles of peace, delighted to receive
These kind attentions near the arms of death.

Thus long on ev'ry hand th' innum'rous host,
Earnest employ'd, dispense their various care,
Till the whole camp and wide-spread champaign, fill'd
With moving crowds, spoke all the several bands
Assembled. This the watchful Monarch soon
Observing, pregnant with emotions high,
Disperses round swift heralds, with command
That all the legion'd bands, in order best,
Under their sev'ral leaders join their ranks,
Whom thus the King attentive may behold;
May see their present state; what force, impair'd,

Asks chief supply, or what unhurt remains.
Busy o'er all the field the troops prepare
Before the Monarch to appear; all pleas'd
To gain th' attention of his placid eyes,
Wont on them all with manly love to beam.
Warriors, their wounds now eas'd of keener pangs,
Hearing these tidings, deem the much-lov'd Chief
Bent to address the host, and of delay
Impatient, scorn their pain, and eager move,
Supported, to behold and hear once more
The honour'd King. Such eagerness pervades
The total host to catch the martial fire
Warming his noble soul, that every heart
Throbb'd high; and soon in range magnific spread
A semi-circle vast, of deep array,
Presents to sight its order'd arch immense;
While o'er th' embattled pomp, broad-glitt'ring, wav'd
Unnumber'd ensigns, tossing in the winds.
Shields, lock'd in shields, a fiery splendor cast,
Flashing afar. Terrific to the view
Stood the firm bulwark of their steely front,
Like some huge rampart, rais'd on high, to guard
Coasts from the ocean, whose proud strength defies
His mountainous waters, lab'ring to o'erwhelm
The stedfast pile, which sole forbids his waves
To rush o'er valleys, cities, people, plains,
And stays his empire o'er a delug'd land.

Eager all waited the directing voice
Of the brave Monarch: he, above the rest,

On a broad altar rais'd of massy stone,
Stood in the midst, majestic. Near him press'd
His ducal chiefs, gazing with sacred awe
On the lov'd King: pre-eminent he shone
Conspicuous from afar. His golden helm,
Under whose plumes, high waving, radiant beam'd
The regal diadem, his manly face
Shadow'd, not cover'd. His right hand sustain'd
His massive spear; his left, his ample shield,
Pictur'd on whose bright round Britannia sat,
Thoughtfully gazing on her ravag'd isle.
Silent awhile he stood: like some tall rock
Unmov'd, around whose awful sides appear
The sea-fowl clinging, while it lifts on high
Its sky-capt front, indignant of the storm.
While sounding trumpets, clarions, and loud drums
Hail'd their Commander, o'er the sea of helms
And beamy spears he cast his wary eyes;
And as the burnish'd armour of the hosts
Shone to the sun, at thought of martial deeds,
A kindling ardor swell'd his rising soul.
He wav'd his spear. Sudden the clangor deep
Of music ceas'd: respectful silence ran
Thro' all the host, and not a sound disturb'd
The solemn pause: then, with voice heard afar,
The Monarch in heart-moving accents spoke.—

" Englishmen, Warriors:—A dreadful dawn,
Disclosing to our sight these ravag'd plains,
Strown with our murder'd fathers, brothers, friends,

Summons us to new war: proud then I see
Your wonted zeal returning: much it needs.
Now have we all beheld our savage foes
Bound by no ties of faith, of every vow
Regardless, that no more must leagues contract
That peace which valour can alone compel.
Have we not seen o'er all our neighb'ring states,
Where treaties purchas'd peace, these madden'd men
Lawless to rage, and breathing only death?
O'er all their fields, once deck'd with woods and groves
And smiling verdure, where our fathers' flocks
Loiter'd at ease,—where fertile rivers wound
Their tranquil course, along whose banks arose
Our fathers' happy homes, where busy towns
Rais'd frequent o'er the land their sacred fanes,—
Now we behold one face of ruin spread,
Their provinces o'er-run, their princes slain,
Or fled thro' fear to distant coasts, their plains
A blacken'd waste, depopulated, drear!
Temples, towns, cities, sack'd by impious fires;
The wretched habitants, now trembling slaves;
Spar'd neither sex nor age! The hoary head
Invaded! Virgins, mothers, wives defil'd!
Heav'n's ministers pursu'd to cruel death!
While in these dreadful scenes, with savage joy
Riots the lawless foe, happy alone
In blood and battle, tyranny and spoil!
Oh England! Oh, my country! That thy plains,
Form'd for mild industry, and peace and joy,
Should witness scenes like these! My bleeding heart

V. 865—895.

Starts cold within me at the thought of these
The miseries which afflict thy groaning land.
Last, my lov'd countrymen,—one family,
In the same bond united, one our doom,—
Last on ourselves become the single stay
Of our else-fallen country, they attempt
Like ruin. Heav'n defend, that ever fear
Should on our plains entail like misery!
Shall we then suffer the perfidious foe
To add new insults, and before our eyes
Cover our plains with slaughter? Shall we see
Tamely, our murder'd fathers, brothers, friends,
Strown in our streets? Behold these Pagan wolves
Prowl with insatiate ravage o'er our fields,
Butcher our infants in their mother's arms,
Or hurl them mangled 'mid their flaming homes?—
My countrymen, to me as children dear,
A cause such as before ne'er call'd for arms,
Summons our valour: call'd to fight for all
Most dear to man—ourselves, our wives, our babes,
Our homes, our hapless country. Heav'n itself,
In its own cause, invokes us to defend
Our true religion; our just, equal laws;
Nor, in their stead, transmit the bloody faith,
And rude decrees, of Pagans to our sons,
A sad inheritance! With Heav'n our friend,
What shall we fear?—But ev'n were that unsure,
(Which who can doubt?) say, shall we trembling wait
Till, back returning, our insatiate foes
Whelm in one common carnage all our host,

Slain in cold blood? No, honour'd countrymen!
If we are doom'd to fall, let us at least
Fall nobly, fighting in defensive war,
For home, for life, for liberty, for Heav'n.
War must revive. I cannot wrong your souls
By arguments: I trust, I know you all
Valiant, and valour now the cause demands.
Now will we never shrink, or own repose,
But patient smile at dangers, pain and death,
Till our persisting arms at last restore
England to peace and safety. Future times,
Wond'ring, shall learn the story of our toils,
And, struck with pious gratitude, shall hail
Us their deliv'rers, fathers; fond shall bless
Our prudent courage, which while daring, wise,
Snatch'd from the verge of ruin's dread abyss
Our trembling country; her, all hopeless, rais'd
From woe to happiness, from death to life.
Heading such legions, thus shall I, untir'd,
Brother in arms and sharer of your toils,
Lead you to glory, freedom, victory!"

V. 925—954.

He ceas'd—and strait from all the host arose
Shouts that thro' heav'n resounded: follow'd soon
Tremendous clangor of their bossy shields,
Struck by vast lances and impetuous spears,
Signal of high applause: awful and loud,
As thunders o'er the sea, from pole to pole
Terribly rolling, thro' the cavern'd waves
Bellow, when tempests, red with lightnings, swell

The hollow'd surge. Zeal glow'd in ev'ry face,
With ardent confidence, as tow'rd the King
And on each other gaz'd the total host,
In silence, but to fervent feelings rapt
Mightier than words could utter. Instant march
And battle undelay'd to ev'ry heart
Seem'd easy; but the prudent Monarch knew
Needful augmented pow'r, ere yet again
His shatter'd army in the deathful field
Might meet th' innumerous foe; nor from their hordes
And unrelenting fury, rashly tempt
Total destruction. He his purpos'd thought
Pursuing, forthwith issues mild command
That all the legion'd bands in station due
Under their sev'ral leaders, pass succinct
In wont review before him, whence his eye
Certain might apprehend their real state,
And mark the losses of each lessen'd pow'r.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK II.

The English army reviewed. The chiefs and their several characters described. Burial of the dead. Alfred and his officers attend the funeral of Siward, an English Earl, who had been killed in the battle. Alfred, at the request of the bards, sings his funeral song. A council of war is held in the royal tent, during which, intelligence is brought that the inhabitants of the country are flying before the army of Kenwulph, the revolted King of Mercia, now on its march to join the Danes; and are hastening to the camp of Alfred for refuge. The council determines that the present English army is inadequate, in point of number, to contend with the enemy to advantage; and that it is expedient for the Earls to depart to their several counties, to collect in person new forces among their vassals. This embassy is to take place the following morning, and all are to return by the fifth day. Evening. The fugitive inhabitants are received into the English camp. Alfred gives a feast to his officers, previous to their departure. Night. In the morning the Earls depart.

ALFRED.

BOOK II.

v. 1—17.

THE Monarch gives the word. Sudden the sound
Of thousand trumpets fills the echoing air.

Say, Goddess Muse, what ducal chiefs renown'd,
Ruling seven southern provinces, the realm
Of Wessex, sole remaining unsubdued,
Led to th' unequal war their banded pow'rs.

First, sternly seated on his warhorse proud,
Came the majestic Oddune, Devon's Duke,
Whom follow'd, in long train of broad array,
His chosen horsemen, bright in gorgeous arms.
Their shields immense, and beamy spears erect,
Shone like some wintry forest, wrapt in ice,
Glitt'ring before the sun. Haughty they came,
Proud of their streaming hair, while o'er their helms
Wav'd their red banners. In their order'd ranks
Rode many noble Thanes, Devonia's boast;
By valour most ennobled, which had won

The Monarch's love. Rulers of hundreds there
Held due command. Many decennaries
Own'd rule subordinate, whose several pow'r
One tything of ten families obey'd.
These following, next appear'd in stately march
His num'rous train of infantry. Tall helms
Shook their proud plumes, as on they came, with noise
Of mailed armour. Glaring on their breasts,
Targes of brass in dreadful range appear'd,
Prominent from whose central boss stood forth
Spikes bladed, keen as swords, whose mortal touch
Pierc'd threefold mail in adverse fight. Each wore
His massy falchion by his belted side,
While their right hands upbore armour diverse,
Huge battle-axes some, others vast spears,
Slings, bows, or iron darts, or pond'rous clubs
Blood-stain'd. Each knew his station'd rank, conjoin'd
All in consorted league, with solemn vows
T' avenge the death of ev'ry neighbour-friend,
Ere to the dang'rous war they came, and left
Pensive their happy homes. Their band contain'd
Full many an honour'd bard, their proud delight,
Skill'd all in songs of fame. Virgins and dames,
Knew the distinguish'd honours of this band:
Their streaming locks, their train of envied bards,
And to their various claims of high respect
Yielded due reverence, by each hero sought,
His dearest guerdon. As the legion pass'd,
The Monarch thoughtful eye'd their warlike train
Much lessen'd, tho' yet strong; and soon he calls

V. 18—47.

Oddune, their potent leader, to his side,
From whose relation he might learn the fate
Of his lost followers in the last dread fight.
The chief with lowly act decent approach'd,
And stretching forth his spear, (the signal wont
Of due obedience) touch'd the Monarch's shield.
Then to the King's enquiry told direct,
That while the Pagans in one whelming mass
Bore down all obstacle, this noble band
In the right wing had borne their fiercest rage,
Nor yielded, till, by foes half compass'd round,
They turn'd, still fighting as they slow retir'd.—
The Sov'reign to his modest tale, with looks
Of confidence and words of grateful praise,
Answer'd, much sooth'd in thought, as in his mind
Calm he revolv'd their multitudinous strength,
And the known valour of th' experienc'd chief.

Him past, approaching next the Monarch sees
Herbert, the ducal chief of warriors, pride
Of Dorset's plains. Touch'd with a solemn awe,
He mark'd the vet'ran chief, whose temp'rate skill
And steady discipline in desp'rate fields
Full oft had wrested vict'ry, when he fought
In bloody wars of the departed Kings,
Alfred's lov'd sire and brothers. As he came,
The King in reverence unhelm'd his brows,
Bending submissive tow'rd the honour'd man.
Him well the Monarch knew, valiant and good,
Knew his heart mild, but patient and serene

In hottest fight. The venerable chief
Was pleas'd, and on his haughty courser soon
Meekly respectful mov'd. No chieftain more
Enjoy'd his followers' love, who now advanc'd
In martial ranks of chivalry, a train
Not num'rous less of potent Thanes, or bards,
Or valiant men; nor wanting costly arms
Less splendid than the noble legion pass'd.
These, as they went, fix'd full their sparkling eyes
On the lov'd King; scarce to their hearts less dear
Than their own Herbert, for whose valued life
Each warrior's heart beat prompt to yield its own:
To whom each man was grateful for mild acts
Of gen'rous favour. All well knew his home
Spread ope its hospitable doors, and gave
To each brave guest a welcome; with high feasts
Chearful regal'd, the noble chieftain's pride,
His followers' meed. Ofter no chief bestow'd
On the deserving brave th' ennobling gift,
Or of the war-horse, spear, or plum'd cuirass;
Hence raising whom he lov'd, to the proud name
And rights of pow'rful Thane, by all rever'd.
Nor then delay long interven'd, before
From the prompt notice of the watchful King
He won like gifts, th' exalted warrior's boast,
Proudest and highest; valour's dear-sought prize.
His total legion pass'd, the King receives
To closer interview the vet'ran chief,
Who soon, (th' accustom'd sign of fealty paid,)
Pious, but with garrulity of age,

Tells his firm trust, that Heav'n will soon avenge
The Pagans' murd'rous guilt and perjur'd fraud;
While the tried valour of the English host
Shall sure prevail. Alfred yields pleas'd assent
And willing thanks for these consoling words,
And to his eager questions soon obtains
Intelligent reply,—that near their chief
Long his assaulted legion firmly stood
The battle's fiercest rage, in whose uproar
Warriors lamented fell, noble and brave,
Nor few: compell'd at last to yield, and leave
O'erwhelm'd in dismal rout, the ruinous camp:
But num'rous still, and brave, his train surviv'd.—
This heard, in thought absorb'd awhile, the King
Earnest revolv'd how soonest to recruit
Each legion's loss; much from th' exerted pow'r
Hoping of Herbert, calm and wise.
Then him
Gently dismiss'd, he marks, full near advanc'd,
Osmund, the ducal chief of Cornwall's pow'rs,
Known by his noble mien, nor less discern'd
By the high-banner'd horse, and eagle shield.
Mournful the hero pass'd, his thoughtful looks
Fix'd solemn on the ground, nor without cause
Absorb'd in grief; for 'mid his princely train,
As on they came, moving in martial state,
(Dreadfully lessen'd) was discern'd the band
Of Athelard, high Thane, Osmund's lov'd son,
Reft of its Leader. Gash'd with frightful wounds,
Slow pac'd the steeds, and in each warrior's look,

Pallid and sad, the gloom of sorrow hung.
Of their own state unconscious, with fatigue
Worn, and their mailed armour grimly dash'd
With blood and toilsome sweat, and many a dint
Of battle. Sole upon their chieftain lost
They ponder'd, heart-oppress'd; for he was dear
To ev'ry soldier; gallant, bold in fight;
Kind to his train; obedient to his sire;
Pious; and loyal to his Sov'reign King.
Bards, as they mov'd, revolv'd his noble deeds,
Sighing, and fram'd in thought the funeral song
To grace his obsequies, and lift his name,
Boast and example to the sons of war!
Nor did not soon the watchful King perceive
The mournful loss, deep-mov'd. Sad sympathy
Hung on his clouded brow, as slow the host
Mov'd silent on with looks of fix'd regret.
Eagerly to his side the Monarch calls
The much-lov'd father, from his lips to hear
The dismal tidings. Twice the sire essay'd
To speak, ere grief would yield him utt'rance: then
Falt'ring he tells—his son, with noble rage,
Had, in the left, twice turn'd the tide of war,
Rushing impetuous on th' assailant foe,
And dar'd all danger; but too sad a fate
Such gallant virtue met; for soon inclos'd,
And like a lion baying his scar'd foes,
His troops beheld him, while they yielding turn'd,
Press'd by o'erwhelming numbers, nor again
Saw ever their lov'd chief, living or dead.

V. 138—167.

Vainly the trembling sire, with pious care,
Had sought his body o'er the deathful field:
Despairing now, he deem'd his mangled corse
Lost in the general heap, and sorrowing pin'd
As never more on his dear face to gaze.—
The King was mov'd. Dear as the honour'd sire,
Scarce in his love the son held second place.
No youthful chieftain more his warm esteem
Possess'd, or dearer to his heart surviv'd
Thro' all the host. Breathing the words resign'd
Of manly patience, to the father's grief
He lent consoling balm; but as he spoke,
Graceful a tear of mild regret bedew'd
The Sov'reign's cheek, which (turning from the view)
Soft his uplifted hand dispers'd away.

Edric came next, whose ducal reign controll'd
The fertile vale of Berks, num'rous in men
And steeds, adapt for war. Their stately ranks
Follow'd the martial chief, as proud he rode
With venerable aspect, old in arms.
Under his dark-cheek'd helmet curling hung
His locks, once streaming brown, now silvery grey,
Bespeaking rev'rence: easy-soul'd and good,
The Monarch knew him; brave, but of his own,
And whom his proper favour rais'd to note,
Partially fond, nor e'er suspecting ill.
Amid his train, not distant, shone behind
The gaudy banner of the youthful chief,
Hianfrid, glorying in his graceful form.

V. 168—196.

Him had the childless Edric's kind regard
Adopted as his son, nor aught deny'd
That growing vanity from earliest youth
Sought or could wish. Often his fav'rite boy
Would he equip in arms, and pleas'd survey
With looks of fond delight and anxious hope.
Now with the confidence of love, the chief
Himself in age declining, to his rule,
With pow'r of ducal Thane, a martial host
Resign'd: himself at last in rural ease
Hoping to die, worn with the toils of war.
Now far conspicuous, on his prancing steed
Richly caparison'd, Hianfrid came,
Studious of shew, and eager to obtain
The gaze of admiration. His broad shield
Glittering with gold profuse, and painted o'er
With bold devices, (tho' as yet no deed
Of signal valour sanction'd such display,)
Borne by the artful Thane on outstretch'd arm,
Hid not his costly armour, dazzling bright;
While from his plumed casque, where crested shone,
With outspread wings, an eaglet, bending prone
T' o'erlook his roseate cheeks; streaming in waves
His dark locks floated on the wanton gales.
Often he turn'd, and on his following train
Look'd back, as on they mov'd—a glorious throng,
Their radiant breast-plates flaming as of gold.
Each his broad falchion glitt'ring at his side
Wore ostentatious, and his burnish'd spear
Wav'd, tipp'd with gold. Bedeck'd with crimson plumes,

Their nodding helmets mov'd with gaudy pomp,
Tinging with roseate gleam their polish'd mail:
As when amid his train of western clouds,
The redden'd sun, fading in distance, sheds
A purple splendor on the sparkling waves.
Next, with the noble Edric's princely train,
After Hianfrid, came, of manlier mien,
Harold, his youthful friend, whose num'rous train
Follow'd, in arms less splendid, but with hearts
Not less courageous than the troops they join'd.
Born in contiguous vales, the rising chiefs
Early had been companions; for the sire
Of noble Harold, in a pristine war,
Slain bravely fighting, left his infant boy
Yet hanging on his widow'd mother's breast.
She pining died. Edric, the hero's friend,
Receiv'd in charge his lands and vassal host;
And, (meet compeer for his adopted boy)
Under the chieftain's hospitable roof
Harold had spent his youth, till now matur'd
He rush'd to war, wielding his father's spear.
Thus had the manly youths, by Edric's care,
Grown up together. Other learning none
Known or desir'd; with title of High Thanes,
Their mutual boast, joyful they led to war
Their troops united. Strong was either host,
Stronger by union. Their long intercourse
Had made them friends, not rivals; for tho' glow'd
In either heart an ardent thirst for fame,
Yet Harold, more by deeds than outward pomp

V. 227—256.

Sought for applause; less vain, haughty no less. BOOK
The King survey'd them pleas'd; and soothing hope II.
Suggested to his thought what future aid V. 257—284
Might from their friendship spring; yet half a fear
Chastis'd his confidence; for he had mark'd
Hianfrid oft o'erbearing, selfish, proud!

The Monarch soon from Edric learns the fate
Of his brave followers in the deathful field,
And hears, disturb'd, Hianfrid's splendid band
Early had fled, while Harold's long endur'd
The dire affray—stedfast, till whelming hosts
Bore down, like torrents; yet the King receiv'd
Gladly th' excusing pleas, by Edric told,
Of closer conflict and unequal foes,
Pressing the wing where rul'd his fav'rite boy.

These pass'd. Next, Alwin came, the ducal chief
Of heroes, banded from the shadowy fields
Of Wilts, in long array of warlike pomp
Marshall'd, and moving on with sound of arms
To harmony of music from soft flutes
And mellow clarions blown: a manly train.
Alwin led on. Wielding his pond'rous spear,
Proudly he sat, exulting in his strength:
While to the view scarce less in tow'ring size
Appear'd his throng of heroes, in bold deeds
Foremost of daring enterprize. The King
Joyful saw these, in number scarce impair'd;
For well he knew their chieftain's eager soul

Ardent and rash: of calm consid'rate thought
Disdainful oft, but prompt by gallant acts
Of dauntless courage, to extort high fame
And wond'ring awe, chill'd oft by anxious fear.
Which noble band survey'd, soon to the King
The chieftain tells of glorious deeds atchiev'd
By his brave train, and points with smiling joy
Their safer state, scarce lessen'd to the view.
With these conjunct came half the num'rous host,
Once by the haughty Kenwulph led to war.
With mad ambition fir'd, he to be less
Than King disdain'd; and rather than obey
And serve a lawful Sov'reign, had preferr'd
From the victorious Pagans to accept
Nominal rule and titled shew of pow'r,
Their vassal: and now held his wish'd-for reign
In conquer'd Mercia. With him half his host,
Lur'd by his trait'rous counsels and inflam'd
To blind rebellion, from the common cause
Seceding, had conjoin'd the faithless Danes.
Yet some the call of duty had obey'd,
Nor join'd th' apostate ruin. As they pass'd,
The gen'rous Monarch eye'd their puissant ranks,
Forgetful of all wrongs; and mark'd their bands,
Most from the field of slaughter safe survive.

Follow'd the manly legion, whose broad limbs
The plains of Somerset, rich in wide vales,
Had nurs'd to strength. Before them splendid rode
Rayner, their ducal head. Unmov'd and stern

Appear'd his aspect; for within him prey'd
Regret, continual since that hated day
When swoln with proud ambition his lov'd friend, V. 314—343.
The dear companion of his happier hours,
Kenwulph, unmov'd by honour's potent voice,
Basely revolted from his country's cause,
Tho' greeted ever by the royal love.
Since had a serious, sullen gloom o'erhung
His deep-stung friend; for save that fatal fault
Of unrestrain'd ambition, he had found
Kenwulph of nobler temper, kind and brave,
Nor yet could mem'ry the lamented crime
Cheerful retrace. Alfred th' unwelcome cause
Knew of his solemn mood; knew Rayner's heart
Glow'd with the love of virtue, and could boast
Humane, ingenuous feelings, own'd by few.
Loyal and brave, he rush'd in deathful fields,
Where danger fiercest rag'd: by his proud train
High-valued, winning by attractive deeds
Their zealous love. Now pass'd the chieftain on,
His shieldless arm hung idle by his side
Enwrapt in healing bands, whose folds conceal'd
A ghastly wound, pierc'd by a Danish spear.
Wan was his visage, and sedate he led
In melancholy guise his shatter'd train.
These pass'd, from Rayner soon the Monarch learns
The sad relation of their dang'rous fight;
And, fill'd with gen'rous pity, hears alarm'd
The loss of many a warrior-chief, whose place
The choice of future fields shall ill repair.

Last, came the legion from the blooming hills
Of verd'rous Hants, and from their pleasant homes
In Vecta's isle, whose health-diffusing shores
The ocean laves enamour'd. As they mov'd,
The King saw griev'd their thinner ranks had borne
Loss, num'rous more than all the pow'rs yet past.
Arous'd to fear, with eager gaze he sought
Siward, their ducal chieftain, wont to guide
His train with skill peculiar. Him in vain
The King explor'd. With fix'd surprise he saw
Advancing in his place, a warrior-form,
Not undistinguish'd yet by valourous deeds,
A young, but gallant Thane,—on whose flush'd cheeks
Play'd a suffusive blush, while soft his mien,
Mingled with modesty, regret, and awe,
Spoke the keen movements of his troubled soul.
Edgar was nam'd the chief. One sire he claim'd
With the brave hero whose proud host he led.
Each valiant chief the beauteous Emma bore
To noble Morcar, pride of Vecta's vales.
Each of the widow'd matron was the hope
And dearest solace. Oft with humid eyes
She by their side had sat, and fond retrac'd
The father's image in each manly form:
But one no more her longing eyes shall see,
Nor ever more her tender-clasping arms
Welcome returning to his native vale.
For in the last terrific midnight war,
O'erpow'r'd by numbers, gash'd with many a wound,
While by his side the gallant Edgar fought,

V. 344—373.

(Ah! death deep-mourn'd!) the noble Siward fell.
Then had shone forth, in all its terrors seen,
A brother's pious fury. Grief, revenge,
Despair, inflam'd at once young Edgar's heart.
Singly he darted 'mid the thickest fight,
Of death disdainful—and while scalding tears
Burst from his eyes, he like a whirlwind rag'd
Resistless far and wide: where'er he rush'd
Death mark'd his blasting course: thro' solid ranks
He open'd broad his way, while his scar'd troops
Follow'd, expecting that one horrid fate
Should whelm each gallant brother; but his zeal
Sav'd from the Pagan grasp the lifeless corse
Of the lov'd Siward; difficultly borne
From shameless insult off the bloody field.
Since had the pious Edgar the remains
Of his lost brother to a shelter'd spot
Mournfully led, where by a well-known brook
Hasty dispos'd, unburied yet it lay,
Waiting due obsequies from living friends.—
Now the sad remnant of that brother's host,
Edgar led on: slow pass'd the train; for wounds
Oppress'd their wearied limbs. Soon to himself
The King invokes the chief, and from him hears,
Struck with keen anguish, the heart-rending tale
By Edgar with meek tenderness reveal'd;
But of the wonders his own arm atchiev'd,
Nothing elate, or conscious; sole in heart
Sorrowing that all his pow'r had not avail'd
To save a brother from the stroke of death.

The King, to pity mov'd and grateful sense
Of Edgar's merit, bade with graceful act
The youthful warrior take, as ducal chief,
Command supreme of all the num'rous host,
Whom late his valiant brother led to war.
Proud honour! yet by all the host receiv'd
With joyful vote, deem'd worthiest to supply
Their much-lov'd Siward's place. Bards mark'd the youth
Witnesses of his valour, and prepar'd
To sing at festive boards his bold exploits.

Pass'd all the pow'rs of Wessex, as the King
Studious had scann'd the various-lessen'd troops,
So much in force impair'd, (alas! before,
To meet so numerous, so fierce a foe
Unequal) vain he deem'd the fonder hope
With purpos'd vengeance rashly to pursue
The murd'rous Pagans: vain th' attempt, to dare
With inefficient strength a lawless foe,
Flush'd and elate with conquest. Much his soul
Sorrow'd, presaging what a train of woes
England must suffer, ere her loyal sons
Could work her peace; yet prompt in thought revolv'd
How best with speedy and augmented powr's
To march to battle, and by fields of war
To end the Danish ravages.
His thoughts
Eager to open, and to hear if aught
Of wiser counsel prudence could suggest,
Round to the various bands the Monarch sends

V. 404—431.

His waiting heralds, with this embassy
Charg'd to each chieftain of the legion'd pow'rs.
" First, o'er the field of death the host will pay
" Due rites of sepulchre to those brave men
" Fall'n in their country's cause: chiefs will repair
" Where the lamented Siward's lifeless form
" Unburied lies: afterward will attend
" Council of import in the royal tent."

Strait o'er the sunny champaign mournful moves
Array'd, the host, led by their several chiefs
On tow'rd the fatal field, where lie confus'd
Th' unburied relics of the dead. Here soon
Busied were all in varied offices,
And wonted rites sepulchral, that the camp
And gory field contiguous, offer now
To the relenting eye a solemn scene.
On every side, o'er all the moving plain,
Warriors and female forms, with tender care,
Frame for their fallen friends the narrow homes,
Last debt of piety! Some bear along,
High-rais'd on hollow shields, (the bier of war)
The wounded dead. Others with toil collect
Huge stones and earthy portions, whence to raise
The hilly mounds, which, o'er their comrades dear
Heap'd num'rous, may display to future times
The field of former slaughter. Thus, while round
Soft in their earthy beds the living lay
The warriors fall'n, and by their side dispose,
As wont, the spear and shield, the solemn priests,

In flowing garments habited, pass slow
On ev'ry hand, and to departed souls
Invoke almighty grace. The bards tune soft
Their tend'red harps, and raise the fervent dirge,
And hymns of grief, praising the brave and good,
Now lost; but not eternally: for still
In blissful climes of peace the good shall meet
Friends dearest lov'd, and clasp their angel forms
In undisturb'd embrace. Full many form
On monumental stones inscriptions rude,
Recordant of a name, or some high deed
Worthy from sons of after-times to share
The meed of glory and undying fame.—
Soft-breath'd, a sound of music and still song
Steals on the ear, from all the tranced field,
Confus'd with murmur faint of hush'd lament.

The King, attended by his num'rous chiefs
Moves rev'rent o'er the plain, and of the dead
Listens the praise, oft to the wild regret
Of the fond relatives yielding kind balm
Of soothing words, with promise that ere long
They shall avenge these insults, and shall free
England from all her suff'rings. On they pass,
Grateful survey'd by all, with eyes that beam'd
Confident hope; and now arrive the place,
Where many potent Thanes and noble chiefs,
Assembled, spoke not distant far the corse
Of the regretted Siward. Hither come,
In station'd order, all his warlike train

To grace his obsequies. The Chiefs give place,
While Edgar, lowly bending, of the dead,
In gory arms stretch'd pallid on the ground,
Now takes a last adieu, and on his lips
Imprints a ling'ring kiss, and silent clasps
The clay-cold form.—Sympathy melts each heart.
Low in th' appointed spot his followers place
The hero dead, and near him careful fix
Shield, spear, and massy battle-axe, and sword.—
Now solemn stillness reigns, while ev'ry man,
To honour the lov'd chieftain, in his shield
Bears a small turf of earth, to form the mound,
Memorial of the place: and soon appears
A hill, firm rais'd, which round with massive stones
Compassing they secure—a lasting guard!
Sighing as thus they close their chief's remains,
And tell his merits.

To the pensive King
The bards approach, and rev'rently to him
Resign the harp, as worthiest and best skill'd,
Acknowledg'd prince of bards, to celebrate
The praise of Siward fall'n. Mild he receives
Th' attuned symphony, while eager bend
The thronging chieftains, in their open'd looks
Pleas'd expectation beaming, and each heart
High-throbbing, conscious that shall kindred fate
Lay low their limbs, their cold remains shall meet
Like honour; in the sight of tender friends
Mourn'd by a royal bard, and to proud fame
Rais'd eminent. The regal minstrel soon,

Uplooking solemn, strikes with practis'd hand
(Fonder employment of his early youth)
The mellow'd strings, while thus his swelling voice
Pours on the list'ning ear the funeral song.

" Soul of departed Siward! whose cold limbs,
Pierc'd with proud wounds, sighing we yield to earth,
Look from thy high abode, and hear thy fame
Told by surviving friends, to thee once dear.
Ah! lost to us too soon, translated spirit!
Noble has been thy nature, bold in war,
Kind to thy friends, who grieve thy loss with tears;
Merciful ever to the fallen foe,
And gen'rous. Thou art gone: but we thy worth
Shall still remember with regret unchang'd.
Example high to all, haughty defence
Of thy afflicted country, to the foe
Terrible; thou, with arm of pow'r, wast wont
To chase the flying ranks in bloody fields
Of fight, as from the dark-wing'd tempest fly
The light ships, wreck'd along the surging main.
Thy meteor-falchion in thy lifted hand
Blazing, before thy mighty, dreadful form,
Legions retir'd—as crowd the fowls of air,
Reeling in terror from the sable sky,
Pregnant with thunder. Underneath thy stroke
They fell, with such resistless force as hurls
The rock-built castles, when all loos'd to rage
Thro' the mid sky impetuous whirlwinds sound,
Which, casting from the base their awful bulk,

With ruinous tumult fill the starting vales.
But to the conquer'd, mild; thy soften'd soul
Mercy diffus'd around, as sheds the sun
His meeken'd beams, and cheers the weeping fields,
Desolate by the storm. Tho' gone, thy name
Is ever fresh among us; and when we,
Thy friends, compeers in war, alike shall feel
Death's chilling hand, and shall like thee be hid
In dark and narrow tombs, even when moss
Has cloth'd our turfy beds, warriors unborn
And long posterity shall grateful sing
Thy praises. Future bards shall oft repeat
Thy fame, transmitted fond from mouth to mouth,
While ever it remains the proud delight
Of heroes, emulous, to know and teach
Songs of past valour. Fathers to their sons
Shall tell thy virtues, till their young hearts beat
To die like thee. This sacred place full oft
Fond they shall visit, straying 'mid these tombs,
And think on those who for their country fell.
This mound with awe peculiar they shall point,
And sighing tell, "Here noble Siward lies."
Farewell, great spirit; rest in honour; known
By all the brave and good to latest times.
For bards to future memory give alone
The good and valiant. None can praise the base:
They die, to dark oblivion doom'd: if nam'd,
Scorn starts and frowns. But when the good man dies,
What is in death his constant soul should fear?—
Sole for those tender friends his bosom feels,

V. 550—679.

Left to bewail his loss. But for himself, BOOK
His soul, from all the cares, and strifes, and toils, II.
Freed of this lower world, and 'scap'd at last
From this her fleshly shell and house of clay,
Which bind her pow'rs to earth, now sudden feels,
Restrain'd no more, in boundless vast extent,
Her own immortal nature, capable
In adoration rapt and blissful sense
To roam creation through, and led by spirits,
Good as herself, inmates of heav'n, to pierce
God's everlasting secrets, and partake
Joys unconceiv'd, happiness without end!
Yet tho' exalted thus the parted soul,
We here are left but men;—our souls as yet
To bodies link'd:—let us then act like men,
Nor to give way disdain to Nature's fond,
Ingenuous feelings, and decorous grief:
But while thus left on this our younger home,
Probationary, strive with care to act
A good and honest part, and each man well
Perform his proper duty, not unknown,
Strongly to ev'ry man by conscience told,
And graciously to men reveal'd from heav'n."

This sung, the Monarch to the listning bands
In pensive admiration rapt, restores
The trembling harp, and us he goes, adjoins
These monitory words:
"Bards, on the tomb
Inscribe the hero's name. Be it your care

To celebrate in song his manly deeds.
And who for such renown would shrink from death?
For you, ye sacred train, fav'rites of heav'n,
Honour'd by all; to you the task divine
Is giv'n, the human mind by your mild arts
To polish and refine, and thro' the mean
Of charming melody, warm in the heart
To plant the seeds of knowledge, virtue, truth,
Among a happy people, open'd then
To those best charms of peace, of useful arts,
And all the sweet delights of social home.
Ah! could we speedy end the dismal woes
Of our distracted country, freed at last
From these fierce foes, then might our better thoughts
Turn to these genial themes, this blest employ,
To spread the stores of science, and diffuse
The spirit calm of cheerful industry,
Commerce, and order. Prospect to my soul
How dear! But, no! th' enchanting vision now
Recedes, and cannot be. Far other scenes
Compass us now: all our united thoughts
Henceforth must center on the bloody field."

Rev'rent approach the venerable priests,
And o'er the high-rais'd tomb decent perform
Religion's wonted rites. Chief among these
Conspicuous stood, Asser, the favour'd friend
Of learning, from Saint David's distant shrine.
Nor was not there Plegmond, Arch-Governor
Of Canterbury's see, nor Grimbald, prime

In graceful science, from politer France.
And there, surpassing most in piety
And zeal to propagate Christ's holy faith,
Counsellor prime of Alfred's earlier youth,
Adulph Saint Neod stood, of kingly race,
The Monarch's kinsman. He the solemn mass
Rais'd high, and fervent pour'd th' affecting pray'r
For the departed chief. Sighs from each breast
Spoke its warm sorrow. To the King the chiefs
Yield grateful honour for those moving strains,
Tenderly soothing the disburthen'd heart.
He other cares bids now employ their souls,
And to the summon'd council thoughtful speed;—
That soon all haste to quit the field of grief.
While Alfred to his side attentive calls
Osmund, his lov'd associate, whose mild heart
Affectionate he knew, and to the charms
Of polish'd learning (by the Monarch's soul
Treasure dear-priz'd) awake. Friendly the King,
Tow'rd the wont council, Osmund by his side,
Moves with meek grace; full many Chiefs and Thanes
Attendant round. The Sov'reign to the sire
Yields consolation for his absent son,
Which to th' afflicted Hero some faint ray
Inspires of dubious hope. And now their steps
Have reach'd the spot rever'd, where splendid fly
The plumy tufas, of the royal tent
Conspicuous signals. Soon the clarions shrill
And din of trumpets thro' the conscious camp
Echo, as wont, the sign of high consult.

Awaiting here the King, heralds appear,
Each from his charge return'd, by him dispatch'd
After the battle's rage to mark the route
Of the retiring foe, and in the port
By Wareham's crowded shore, to view the state
Of their full fleet, if left in order mann'd,
And prompt to sail, or what diverse intent
Seem'd likeliest. To the King himself advanc'd,
Each with meek act his embassy reveals.

All enter now within the dome superb,
Brilliant throughout with shine of lucent lamps,
Thrown from the gold-bright roof in pendent range.
The num'rous Chieftains, Thanes. and Bishops take
Wont stations. Reverential silence reigns.
High at the far extreme the Monarch sat,
Under a fretted canopy, whence hung,
Falling in graceful folds, rich tapestry
Splendid of silk and gold, where female hands
Had wrought the pictur'd tales of pristine wars.
Rising with graceful act, the Monarch soon
His prejudg'd counsel thoughtfully declar'd.
" Peers, Chiefs, since now with sorrow we have seen
The losses of our host, our prime concern,
Or ere avenging arms can hope to save
Our suff'ring country, must be deem'd, that loss
With adequate supply best to repair.
Brave as I know you all, and brave the host,
Yet vain, alas! your gen'rous zeal would prove,
Should we, presumptuous, dare our lesser force,

Enfeebled as we see, now to oppose
Against the thousands whom the swarming North
Pours from her icy mountains on our plains,
Increasing still, fierce as the howling wolves
That prowl her desarts, and to madness driv'n
With fancied triumph. 'Twere a grievous crime
That high intrepid valour, which disdains
The deadliest danger, rashly to expose
To sure destruction. No, my noble friends!
Your country eyes you with a trembling hope,
Sav'd but by you, her last, her only shield.
How soonest from each province to convoke
A force more equal to the hostile pow'rs,
Thus I advise. Hence let each ducal chief,
Departing, seek the plains that own his sway,
None distant far; and there with active skill
Summon all freemen, whose selected strength
Best suits the field of arms, to join the war.
There by his presence and his heart'ning voice
Dispense a courage ardent as his own,
Till the whole land, by indignation rous'd,
Shall catch the gen'rous flame: and her best sons
With emulous impatience rush to arms.
Each chief returning with collected pow'rs
Ere some near day, which our concerting thoughts
Shall judge most meet, hence will we march conjunct
T' assail with surer hope th' innum'rous foe,
Who now (so heralds certain tidings bring)
Bends toward Exham's walls his furious steps,
Intending there to found a settled home,

V. 697—736.

And spoil for sustenance the country round.
Then will we dare whatever form of fate
Fell danger can oppose: then full exert
Each his indignant valour, firm, unmov'd,
Fearless of numbers; nor, howe'er unmatch'd,
Despair, or fail at last, of victory.
So, when at length by battles hardly won,
We conquer the fierce foe,—then may our thoughts
Turn to improve our country, and by arts
Of gentler kind, compose her to calm bliss.
Then for my people, children of my care,
Dear source and end of all my hopes and toils,
We may behold, in lieu of horrid wars,
Quiet restor'd, to ev'ry man secur'd
The tranquil comforts of endearing home;
Order establish'd; th' intersected realm
Into known bound'ries parted; and all ranks
Link'd in one social chain, that equal laws
Promulg'd and executed, may dispense
Justice at each man's door, and may defend
To each his right; each of his neighbour's weal
And conduct watchful, knowing himself bound
Pledge for his fellow's industry, and faith,
And gen'ral life. Arts, science shall approach,
Op'ning the human mind, as spreads the bud,
Matur'd by summer suns. Cities shall rise
Majestic o'er our plains, and frequent-rear'd
Castles to guard their wealth. Commerce shall send
Her ample burdens to each foreign clime,
Where Eastern India spreads her spicy stores,

Or Northern oceans lave their icy realms
'Mid shores yet unexplor'd, by our bold prows
Soon to be pierc'd and known. Navies shall ride
August our circling seas, and guard our isle,
Admiring Europe's boast, pride of the world!
While o'er our cultur'd fields Plenty shall wave
Her richest stores, provoking Industry
Thro' every breast. Religion's ministers,
Honour'd and copied in their decent lives,
Shall breathe heaven's tidings of good-will, and peace,
And joy among mankind; to the Supreme,
(As is most just) glory and grateful praise.
Till o'er the wond'ring realm, from end to end,
One active face of labour and of art
Shall spread benign and bless the smiling land,
Rais'd to high dignity of wealth and pow'r,
And polish'd manners, mild-uniting all,
While each man under his own roof secure,
With his own family, shall long enjoy
Peace and domestic happiness. Oh! scenes,
Rapturous to my fancy as the hours
Of bliss in heav'n! These future must become
Our thought, our daily hope, our ceaseless aim."

V. 751—785.

He ended; and delighted gratitude
Echo'd around the tumult of applause:
While smiles and looks intent, with awe sublim'd,
Thro' all the deep-mov'd synod told the heart;
Till tall-uprising, his less thoughtful mind,
Alwin, with quick impatience thus propos'd.

" Rev'rent, my noble peers, to you I ope
My wishful purpose: let not then my thoughts
Offend, tho' not obey'd. I know the pow'rs
Of our proud enemy in number much
Exceed our own; in valour, as I trust,
Nothing—but far our second; by so much
Inferior here, that still I count their strength
Only as match'd—superior I disclaim.
Therefore what hinders that we instant march,
Victory undelay'd by fight to gain,
Scorning new aids, nor lose the proud renown
And glory, wanting to more equal fields."—

Sternly he sat, and opposite him rose
The venerable Herbert; calm, sedate,
Majestic were his looks: his hoary hair
Flow'd o'er his paler cheeks, as forward bent
Leaning he rested on his pond'rous spear.
A sudden rev'rence thrill'd thro' Alwin's heart,
As on himself he mark'd the eyes affix'd
Of the grave vet'ran, who his sober thoughts
To him address'd with words of sage reproof.

" Restrain, impetuous chief, thy hasty rage
And undigested counsel, and revere
The prudent foresight of maturer thought.
Haughty and bold! th' emotions of thy heart
Learn to controul, and patient judge awhile,
Weighing with modest deference. Prudence, still.
Remember, is true valour's solid base.

Say, should we now thy wish'd advice pursue,
What other could be deem'd the desp'rate deed,
Than mad to rush upon a yawning gulf.
In vain our ruin'd land should then deplore
Her brave defenders lost, and look around
Anxious for new supplies; her other realms
Now all subdued; our's her sole guardian pow'r;
Our's then must fall the last sad sacrifice,
And England's sons must evermore be slaves!
Hence be that dreadful thought! No, valiant peers;
Trust me, the counsel of our noble prince
None can improve. There wisdom joins, as wont,
Her temper'd beam with valour's ardent fire.
Nought need we fear to trust us to the guide
Of those great talents, which, with lofty eye,
O'erlook each scene, and mark its utmost end.
Let us obey then, and prepare to part
Each for his proper plains, assembling there
Our brave adherents to fresh war. The time
Demands our readiest speed. Let all our thoughts
Now center on the coming enterprize."

V. 814—842.

He spoke, and to the list'ning synod pleas'd
His words discreet. Applause gave full assent,
While on the Monarch and the vet'ran chief
All rev'rent gaz'd. Which seen, the Monarch rose
To sum in brief the council's fix'd result—
When, lo! wide-bursting, open fly the doors
Of the full tent, and, rushing to the midst,
Soldiers appear, who tow'rd the Monarch lead

Strangers in priestly habits. Heard without
Instant a roar of shouts and clashing shields
Stuns the dash'd ear. Rise from their seats the chiefs V. 843—871.
Amaz'd. Immediate asks the King, unmov'd,
The cause of this strange tumult. To him soon
Answer'd the soldiers.

" Pardon, noble prince,
The zeal of dang'rous tidings. As we stray'd,
Late at the camp's extreme, surpriz'd we saw
Thick-rolling clouds of dust enlarging rise
Plain o'er the hill—thro' which, distinguish'd soon,
Crowds gleam'd of men, and steeds, in throngs that seem'd
Approaching tow'rd the camp. Ere long we mark'd,
Advanc'd full near, before the rest, a train
On flying coursers hasting to the tents,
Seeming as heralds charg'd with some emprize.
Arriving soon, these venerable priests
Accosted us, and eagerly requir'd
Before the Monarch to be led, to him
The purport of their message to reveal."

Now led before the throne, the priestly train
With decent mien before the Monarch bow,
Humble; when solemn thus the foremost spoke.
" Hail, gracious Sov'reign! deem not that the crowds
Who seek in populous throng thy shelt'ring camp
Are enemies: both we and who approach
Are friends and subjects. Doubting lest the camp
Might judge them foes, we charg'd have left their ranks
T' explain their coming. Miserable news

Await thine ear. Alas, for England!—lost,
For ever lost! Heav'n, with our crimes incens'd,
Dooms to destruction our devoted land."

Falt'ring he paus'd. To him, with voice compos'd,
The King:—"Whatever be thy dismal charge,
Speak out: a brave man knows not to despair."

The priest then answer'd:—"While the dreadful fame
Of Alfred's routed pow'rs, and leagues of peace
Violate, o'er th' astonish'd country flies,
The trait'rous Kenwulph of his Mercian train
Has suddenly conven'd a host immense,
And now o'erspreading far the ravag'd land,
They enter Wessex, with intent to join
By Exham's fated walls th' innumerous foe.
Before their furious march, in panic fear
Fly all the wretched habitants, who fill
The tract they threat to cross, in crowded mass.
Left to the ruin of th' approaching foe
The whole dispeopled land, their emptied homes,
And fields half-cultur'd. Hither bends their course,
To thee they fly for shelter and for life:—
Impatient hasting tow'rd this camp, their sole
Asylum.—And the Danes who bend their march
Tow'rd Exham's walls, with carnage mark their steps,
One hideous path of ruin! Bursting fierce,
Broad sabres gleaming in their hands, the doors
Of ev'ry mansion, plunder, lawless spoil
Suffice not; but with mad insatiate rage,

They scatter o'er the land resistless fires:
Towns, villages are wrapt in flames! in crowds
Fly the scar'd natives from their burning homes,
While the fell murd'rers with uplifted swords
Or gory axes, thro' the streaming streets
Lay them defenceless, or pursue their flight!
Sad shrieks of agony, groans of distress,
In horrid discord fill the lurid air!
Ruin on ruin threats the reeking land!
Just GOD, forsake us not! What mortal pow'r,
What but thine own almighty arm can save
From terrors such as these, far worse than death!"

He ceas'd: while o'er his venerable cheeks
Roll'd the big-gushing tears. The chiefs, inflam'd
To tenfold indignation, burn to meet
The trait'rous Kenwulph. Grief and pity rend
Their gen'rous bosoms, with their country's woes
Heart-struck. Revenge upon the cruel Danes
Fills ev'ry soul. Eagerly they demand
That instant may be fix'd the wish'd-for day,
When all return'd with new-assembled aids
May march to battle. Then the Monarch thus.

"How swells my bosom, when I see your souls
Fir'd with new courage, as new dangers rise!
Leading such spirits, tho' the Danish host,
Leagu'd with unhappy Kenwulph's rebel pow'rs,
Tripled in number met, nought would I doubt
Of vict'ry. No, my chiefs! the day shall come

When your impatient valour shall enjoy
Battle and full reward. To-morrow's dawn
Shall speed each ducal chief to band new aids
On his own plains. These chos'n, let him conduct
Back to our camp his full-assembled train;
That ere the fifth day closes, we may hail
The last return'd. So the sixth morning's sun
Proudly shall view our eager banners wave,
Marching to save from misery and death
Our long-insulted country,—to atchieve
Triumph, and glory, liberty, and peace.
Meanwhile a band of seamen to our fleet
Escorted, shall adapt our naval pow'rs
To meet in battailous array the foe,
Prompt now, with all their num'rous ships, to part
From hence (so heralds certain tidings bring)
Tow'rd Exham's shores.—But now occasion bids
That kind we meet these miserable crowds
Approaching, and within our shelt'ring camp
Dispose them safe. This done, as long fatigue
Since midnight's dismal hour has worn our limbs
That need refreshment, and the shades of eve
Mind us of rest, within this spacious tent
Meet we ere long to share the genial feast,
When wine, and songs of bards, and converse sweet,
Shall sooth fatigue, and heal the toils of war,
Till th' hour of sleep arrive, and lap our frames
In strong repose, fitting the new-brac'd limbs
Vig'rous to part ere the first morning shine."
This said, the council strait the King dissolves,

V. 928—957.

And, from his throne descending, thro' the midst
Passes, while all th' uprising chiefs his steps
Follow commov'd, and thro' the thronging camp
Disperse with haste, till at the far extreme
Arriv'd, they view, beyond the subject vale,
The crowds immense, yet pouring o'er the plains,
Disorder'd; while, deep-echoing, various sounds
Swell in the burden'd gales. Soon o'er the vale
Their num'rous van advancing, shouts of joy
Gratulant rise from all the spreading throng,
Ev'n to their fainter rear, glad to behold
Their shelter within view.—As when a fleet,
Homeward returning from the isles of Ind,
Escap'd at last from rocks, and shoals, and storms,
Pours o'er its decks the crowding mariners,
Hailing with shouts that drown the surges' roar
The gleaming prospect of their native shores.

And now the multitudinous populace
Reach full the camp, and with th' enquiring host
Hold answering converse, that the mingling noise
Of thousand voices murmurs o'er the plain;
While near th' attentive Monarch eager throng
Grey venerable sires, and hoary priests,
Peasants and citizens, and comely youths,
And beauteous females, bearing in their arms,
Or leading by the hand, their helpless babes.
Pale with fatigue were all, and many pierc'd
With painful wounds, dealt by th' infuriate foe.
All fondly gaze, tears swelling to their eyes,

On the lov'd King, and grateful blessings pour
On him their sole defence, their only hope.
Their sad laments the King with pity hears,
Revolving unappall'd his country's woes;
Then strait commands his host the exil'd throng
Throughout the tents to lead, and to recruit
With entertainment due. The host obeys.

'Twas eve, and in the west the broaden'd sun,
Calm-setting, o'er the varied landscape threw
His purpling beams, which on the burnish'd steel,
That cloth'd the moving troops reflected full,
Enwrapt the warriors as in sparkling flames;
While from beneath their ruddy helmets stream'd
Their shadowy tresses in the evening gales.
Loud warlike music, and the sounding tread
Of multitudes, the neigh of prancing steeds,
The noise of lowing herds, the bleat of flocks,
Swell'd the full tumult, that responsive far,
With mingling echoes, hill and valley rang!

Th' attentive Monarch bids, thro' all the camp,
His chieftains pass: nor fail the troops t' exhort
Full from the festive table to partake
Mead and deserv'd repast, their slacken'd strength
To animate anew. Himself prepares,
To meet his chieftains at the regal board.

Obeisant soon, amid th' illumin'd tents
Pass the chief heroes, and with welcome voice

Salute the feasting bands. Uprise the guests
Rev'rent around, of various groupe compos'd,
Martial,—but, like those hospitable scenes
Domestic, when mild peace at hallow'd times
Kept jubilee, where unaffected shone
Joy and serene benevolence. There sat
Warriors in glitt'ring armour, tythings all
Of friends, colleagued each gloriously to die
For other. Frequent intermix'd, the face
Of beauty shone, scatt'ring around sweet smiles
That charm'd the sense of pain or thoughts of war.
Bards there in honour sat, and shot around
Glances keen-fix'd, to mark whoe'er in fight
Rush'd dauntless, and prepar'd his song of fame;
Or, soft'ning to delight, beheld the looks
Of virgins, sidelong bent upon the youths
Best-lov'd, with speaking gaze. Harps thrilling struck
Tones, full-responding to the solemn voice
And rapt eye, rais'd to utter bold exploits,
Crown'd with no fading glory: then, dissolv'd
To melting languishment of sweetest airs,
Plain'd the lamented fate of friends, no more
To mix in battle, or at eve to cheer
The feast with pleasant voice, now hush'd in death.

Converse succeeds: their Monarch's grand designs,
His past atchievements, and his patriot toils,
Dangers, and battles fought,—his hard escapes,
England's much-alter'd face, since first his hand
The regal sceptre pois'd:—these thro' the tents

From ev'ry raptur'd tongue draw grateful praise.
The soldiers thus each other's swelling hearts
Rouse to high ardour and devoutest love
For their insulted country, eager all
To follow the lov'd King to glory' or death.

V. 1043—1071.

These, thus employ'd, the chieftains leave, and seek
The Monarch's tent, there to enjoy, as wont,
The sumptuous feast. Here entering, they behold,
Well-pleas'd, th' exuberant board with grateful meats
Spread, and ambrosial mead, and sparkling wines.
Splendid along the princely table shone
Vases of gold, with massy services
Of silv'ry pomp; and (dazzling-bright as gems
Or orient pearls) fair glassy ornaments,
Invention new and priz'd, reflecting wide
Lights in their brilliant shapes, tasteful dispos'd.
Round the wide-affluent board the heroes take
Their order'd place: Bishops rever'd, and Thanes,
The female train, wives, matrons, beauteous maids,
And venerable bards, in station due,
Commingle. At the head the Monarch sat
Crown'd, and his manly limbs array'd in arms
That blaz'd with royal lustre. Him beside,
On either hand, (th' accustom'd kingly meed
Of gracious favour) took their envied seats
Two hoary-headed bards: eye-witnesses
Of many a brave exploit in foughten fields,
Now living in the sacred rolls of fame.

Rising, the King salutes his seated guests,
Welcoming all: the followers' proudest boast,
Thus at their leader's crowded board to share
Magnificent regale, whom equal pride
And joy inspires, thus round him to survey
The pow'rful chiefs, dearer from dangers past.
Near each are laid their spears, and orbed shields
Pictur'd with effigies diverse, proud marks
Of prowess pers'nal: or descent superb;
And various-crested helms, with wavy plumes
O'erhung. The heroes share the feast: with joy
Proceeds the strong repast; the cheering wines
Copious go round, and, in libations rich,
Nectareous mead. Virgins, where'er they sit,
(Proud honour!) joyfully dispense to all
Plenteous refreshment, and in brimming cups
Hand sparkling drink, offer'd with sweetest smiles.

Far at the opposite extreme, appear'd,
Majestical, the Queen; and, by her side,
The Monarch's sister, Ethelfleda, late
The wife of Burthred, Mercia's King, now dead,
Driv'n by the cruel foe to foreign shores.
They their attentions mild, and affable
Endearments, liberal with answering looks
Diffuse around, and graceful animate
The feast. Entranc'd is ev'ry warrior's heart
To calm oblivious joy, won by the charms
Of beauty, festive mirth, and genial fare.
The full repast remov'd, meekly the King

Uprises, and a golden goblet, crown'd
With mead, exalting, first to heav'n returns
Thanks due for all its goodness; soleman then
Utters the fond memorial, Sorrow's claim;
" Peace to the souls of heroes, fall'n in fight!"
Then tastes, and rev'rent to his left compeer
Extends the cup, with fervent raptures pass'd
And pious love around. The sons of song,
At wonted interval, prepare with awe
To strike the living lyre, prompt each to pour
Alternate rhapsody, potent to lift
Chiefs to unfading glory and renown,
Whome'er their sacred and deep-listen'd lays,
Not venal, but to virtue only ope,
Shall deign to celebrate. Soon stealing rise,
Along the taken air, from dulcet strings
Ushering a sound conscious of sweetest being,
Symphonious prelude and delicious tones,
That sooth to trembling audience and amaze,
The raptur'd ear. Which charmed breath diffus'd,
Anon, deep-resonant, full-swung, the strings
Swell at command the pow'rful voice, and shake
With flying tumult all th' impetuous harp,
Rouzing to awe and joy the heart-mov'd chiefs;
While from the gifted mouth they hear resound
Names high and various, each succeeding each,
Calling the rapt attention to grand themes
Of warriors, big with patriot-fire, and fields
Won by their arm, and mightiest deeds of fame.
No ear was vacant of fix'd reverence

To list what heroes won envied acclaim.
High-throbb'd each heart, and ev'ry cheek betray'd
Emotions strong,—swift-crimson'd, or all-pale,
As varying passions sway'd,—of eager hope,
Fear, or the flush of trembling joy. They sung
Alfred, in raptures multiform: thee too,
Osmund, the friend of learning, and in fight
Terrible: nor less loud their songs repeat
Oddune, and Herbert, Rayner, Athelard,
(Athelard captive, or in battle slain)
In strains diversified with majesty
Resistless, and transfuse to lofty song
Triumphal pomp. Then first to glorious fame,
Edgar, the youthful chief; and Harold, Thane
Valiant and modest, high were rais'd, and drew
Welcome applause from all the festive board.
Honour'd was then the hero, brave but rash,
Alwin. Thee, Siward, too they plain'd, so late
Wont with unenvying ear to list the praise
Of noblest heroes, or in dreadful fields
To spread wide paths for Vic'try's gory wheels;
Ah! fall'n, and in the earth's cold bosom laid!
These sung, compos'd to melting cadence, soon
Changes the furious stormy din of war
To softest melody, that breath'd the praise
Of female virtue, and the winning charm
Of unassuming beauty, sweetest then,
While in the tender offices of love
Meekly employ'd; sedulous to deceive
Anguish of bloody fields, or cheer with hope

The doubt and gloom of melancholy thought,
Best sooth'd by social comfort, and the smile
Of fond and female love. Ceas'd now the strains
Of voice and music, pleas'd, the King, as wont,
Presents to each glad bard a glitt'ring gift,
The meed of honour,—bracelets of pure gold,
Or pendent chains to grace the sacred neck.

Pleasing discourse alternates brimming cups,
Fill'd honorary to deserving names,
Or votive wishes of high enterprize.
The King adjoins his grateful praise to those
Heroes whose deeds have won the meed of bards,
Judges and witnesses of valiant deeds.
Edgar, new-honor'd name, inciting warm
By acts of worth still to retain his fame,
Cheers too the sadder Osmund with fond hope
Soon to regain his Athelard, endear'd
To all.

The battle's conduct, its strange turns
And various fortune, each prompt tongue employ,
With question apt and full. The Danish chiefs
Character'd tempers, and their differing views
Educe observant inference. Were recall'd
The Danish leaders' deeds;—how Oskital,
Devote to slaughter, avarice, and lust,
Had led to spareless havoc; that by him
Urg'd, the bold Amund, bred in storms and wars,
Had sack'd the camp; in battle and in blood
Exulting. Guthrun, kingly-brave, had fir'd

To list w[illegible] of pain or death,
Hi[illegible] the gods;
[illegible] troops to think of palaces,
[illegible] leasure reigns, as sword in hand, gore-bath'd,
[illegible] press'd the reeking earth, which still they hail'd
As glory's purple couch, and deem'd this life
Well was exchang'd for never-ending joys.

This heard, the fire of glory, and of virtue
Apparent seeds, tho' in an enemy,
Misled so fatally, and to bad end
Perverted, from the thoughtful Monarch drew
Sighs, and the soft'ning glow of tender pity,
Which thus in moving accents from him broke.—

"Oh, strange beliefs! which the surrender'd soul
Prompt thus to yield up life, and set at nought
All quiet, social bliss; but in dire fields
Anguish to scorn and torment, and invite,
With earnest longing, wounds and death—in hope
Hence sure to seize the key that opes to worlds
Of happiest glory, where in company
Of gods and heroes, they may still enjoy
Battles and feasts, till all these worlds shall end
In universal war.—Oh, dreadful faith!
Pow'rful as terrible! that fills with fear
Of any death, save by the sword's fell stroke,
Prohibited by threats of endless woe,
And unrepriev'd abode in worlds of pain,
Till all creation perish.—These beliefs

Render so hard of victory, or firm leagues
Our much-deluded foes. Guthrun, their King,
(Sure no ignoble leader) owns a soul,
All awe and prostrate reverence for these gods,
And scenes of fictious glory: burning still
T' expel Christ's peaceful faith, and in its stead
Plant in our isle these horrid mysteries:
Of Christian precepts, mild and heav'nly true,
Alas, unconscious! Doctrines, which alone
Are potent to persuade and curb fierce man
From savage violence, and can alone
Melt the composed soul to love sincere
Of tranquil peace, diffus'd benevolence,
Affections kind and virtuous—duties dear—
These sole endear and gladden life, and fit
The soul for bliss, (not strange or unprepar'd)
In worlds where peace and love immortal reign.
Unhappy people! wand'ring from your homes
In quest of wars and death—Ah! could we once
Banish these clouds of error, and inform
Your minds capacious with just rays of truth;
Then might we hail you brothers, and of foes
Hiding the name, forget these cruel wars;
Bosom you as one family,—as friends
United to restore England to peace,
And found her happiness, her deathless glory."

Emotion fill'd the list'ning chiefs, still bent
To hear, tho' Silence lent awhile soft pause
To thought.—Next, Kenwulph's league and prime r

Attract discourse, by many execrate,
By Rayner with meek pleas gently excus'd,
And by the pitying King lamented more
In sorrow than in anger. Him the Thane
Hianfrid once had known, and now describes
Ambitious and self-will'd, for treason ripe,
Ere yet in open war he breath'd defiance.

Pass'd in such converse, wanes the lengthen'd night;
And now the fading lights, measuring the hours,
Beckon repose, and whisper balmy sleep,
Whose soft embrace may scatter freshen'd strength
On limbs o'erwatch'd, and picture pleasing dreams;
When, meek-uprising, the delighted guests
Token departure; and to Alfred yield
Heartfelt adieus. The venerable priests
Forebode heaven's blessing, and dispense around
Solace and hope. Bards augur proud success,
Retiring. Soon the regal tent all leave,
Pleas'd and much sooth'd in thought, and with deep awe
Inspir'd to apprehend the grand designs
Of their high Monarch, with benevolence
And majesty sublim'd. Harsh discontent
No bosom haunts, save of the vainer Thane,
Hianfrid. He gloomy and sad retir'd,
Troubled in heart, by rankling envy torn,
To hear young Edgar, Harold, and high names
Of valiant chiefs display'd by willing bards,
His own unsung. Brooding malevolence,
And hate, and sour suspicion, on he pass'd,

With solitary step, where his high tent
Stood glimmering.
Thro' the stiller camp had ceas'd V. 1276—1305.
Harps and the song of bards, and slumb'rous rest
Inclin'd the wearied host, as tow'rd their tents
The chieftains pass dispersing. Reigns hush'd peace.
Solemn and calm, Night lifts her sober veil,
While all th' innumerable train of stars,
A glitt'ring canopy of soften'd gold,
Spangle heav'n's azure vault, and to the moon,
Full-orb'd, diffusing from her silent throne
A flood of argent light, yield homage due,
Each in his sphere, in various glory cloth'd,
Mingling their tributary radiance.
Now in the tents, o'er each helm-pillow'd head,
Sleep shook her velvet wing, on each clos'd eye
Scatt'ring oblivious dews. Around the camp
Pac'd slow the station'd watches, of each sound
That distant mov'd the dim-expansive air
Conscious. While now o'er shapes obscure, and shades,
Night urg'd her sable car in slow advance,
Seated with Silence, her eye-fix'd compeer,
Not unemploy'd angelic essences,
Vigilant walk'd the earth, or pierc'd unseen
The curtain'd tents, fraught each with heav'nly charge,
Before the sleeping fancy to present
Auspicious dreams;—or gently fan the lids
Of wounded heaviness, till sealing rest
Obedient came, and lock'd in rapt'rous peace
Disturbed pain;—or, soaring high, o'erlook'd

The glimmering landscape with bright ken, to guard
Danger approaching.

Thus the gradual Night
Recedes, till rosy Morn at length unfolds
Her saffron banner in the eastern skies,
Borne by the hours before the dazzling car
Of Phœbus, rising from the pearl-hung couch
Of Amphitrite, and Ocean's coral bow'rs—
Thro' every tent upspring the jocund troops,
Fresh as Aurora's dews. The steel-girt chiefs
Assemble soon before the royal tent,
Ere the first lark had tun'd her matin-song
Under heav'n's sapphire portals. Them awaits
Alfred, already arm'd: and greeting glad
Receives each sprightly hero. Age now feels
The glow of youth. Thronging around appears
Beauty in loveliest mien, where soften'd looks
Decorous told the feeling heart, that griev'd
The warriors' parting, and, suffus'd in tears
Of fond affection, bade to each adieu!
Tears, soon dispers'd by solace of return
Promis'd, with multitudes of summon'd aids,
O'er the surrounding hills to be beheld
Marching in state to music's warlike sounds,
Ere five times down the western sky the Sun
Descending, shall illume the gold-veil'd waves,
Or bid grey Twilight 'gin his shadowy reign.

V. 1306—1334.

The Monarch last each parting hero greets
With accents valedictory, and tells

What purpos'd cares the vacant interval
Shall occupy, till their desir'd return;
Chief, to adapt for arms the stranger crowds
Newly arriv'd, and into order'd bands
Array their chosen youth: then to restore
By active toil, and forage best, the camp.—

Thus cheer'd, and of their destin'd embassy
Instruct, the ducal chiefs, escorted proud
Each by his chosen train, on neighing steeds
To their known provinces begin their way;
Hail'd each by rising shouts from all the host,
Witnessing their departure. With fix'd eyes
These mark their course, till their last glimmering forms,
Fading in distance, melt to vacant air!

ARGUMENT OF BOOK III.

Part of the Danish army, under the command of Guthrun, has arrived at Exeter, and encamped there. He surveys the works. The remaining bands, who have been employed in pillaging the country, successively arrive. The chiefs are welcomed by the bards with songs, suited to their several characters. The whole army being at length convened, the three Generals, Guthrun, Oskital, and Amund, address them in turn. Sacrifices to the principal gods, adored by the Danes, are commenced near the outskirts of the camp, at which the bards, or priests, of each officiate, and sing appropriate hymns, according to the Gothic mythology.

ALFRED.

BOOK III.

V. 1—19.

GUTHRUN, meanwhile, the Pagan King, had borne
Afar his populous legions, and the pow'rs
Chief of the Danish host, where rose the walls
Of Exham, station pre-consult. To him
As Sov'reign General, had the charge devolv'd
Fit place to choose, and in warlike array
Marshal the new encampment. His pitch'd tents
Extended o'er commanding heights, that sway'd
The subject town, and port, and champaigns rich,
Wash'd by the waters of smooth-rolling Exe,
Whose ample bay he destin'd should ere long
Feel his innum'rous navy ride her waves,
Transported hither from Dorsetian shores.
As yet in bands dispers'd, the other pow'rs
Arriv'd not, but, wide-roving, ravag'd fierce
Each intervening province, unoppos'd.
These, with their gather'd wealth, heralds had now
Summon'd to join the camp, whom their prime King
Awaited, where he lay, spacious intrench'd,

Maturing deep designs, his constant reign
To fix in England's isle, and o'er her plains,
Fertile and fair, his wand'ring colonies
To stablish in continuous home, and hence
Banish Christ's peaceful faith; but in its stead,
To found among her native race, subdued,
Religious rites that breath'd perpetual wars,
Deem'd the sole gate of everlasting bliss.

Pond'ring these aims, studious he had explor'd
His peopled camp, which to th' alarmed eye
Might seem to bosom space, immense no less
Nor vast, than those huge Babylonian walls,
Chaldea's fam'd metropolis, the work
Regal of high Semiramis, whose wide
Circumf'rence girt afar its glitt'ring fanes,
And on whose top chariots in festive games
Magnific pass'd, by wond'ring nations gaz'd.
Flush'd with supernal triumph, all the host
Glow'd for new wars and vict'ry: fury fill'd
Their lab'ring breasts, as o'er the wide-spread tract
Active they toil'd.
Conspicuous in the midst
Rose the high tent of Guthrun, honour'd King,
Glitt'ring with royal splendor. Near uprais'd
Aloft, dark-stream'd, rolling in awful waves
Along the shudd'ring air, the standard vast,
Big with the holy raven's conscious form.
Forth from his pomp-swol'n mansion, issu'd proud
The sov'reign leader. Kingly was his shape,

And mien majestic, as with haughty strides
Tow'ring he came, in steely armour hid,
Profuse of gold. Shook by his stately steps
Slow wav'd the sable plumes, that overhung
His brazen helm, with honourable dints
Of war inflicted deep. His massy spear
Firm'd his gigantic stature, sway'd with ease.
His pond'rous falchion, by his belted side
Swung massive, as he stalk'd. His princely train
Follow'd of num'rous bards, and sacred scalds,
Whose flowing beards, time-silver'd, in each heart
Struck deepest veneration. Rich they mov'd,
With gifts munificent adorn'd of gold
And splendid spoils, meed of illustrious song,
Or sage instruction in deep mysteries
To high-born chiefs; what gods in hour of need
Friendliest invok'd, holy rememb'rance claim.

Attended thus, the Monarch Gen'ral moves
Amid his armed host, and eyes their works,
Various. Their mailed armour frequent sprent
With clotted gore, (signs of dire-foughten fields)
Answer'd in union to their stern aspect
And lofty stature, that bespoke the soul
High and imperious. Busied on each hand
Some rear or deck their warlike homes, or dig
Mounds, or uprear broad banners to display
Where habitate superior chiefs, who spread
The sumptuous feast: others construct vast stores,
Capacious of provision, forage, steeds,

And needful armour; some with awe devout
Raise high the chaste-flower'd altars, whence shall rise
Smoke of rich victims to propitious gods.

Thus o'er the tract immense unnumber'd cares
The rapt attention draw, all bent to form
Abode commodious for the present host
And legions fast advancing. By his troops
Ador'd, th' imperial chief toil's wearied brow
Sooths with kind hope of proud regale, and song,
Spoil, and extatic revels, giv'n to cheer
Heroes, devote to war: " His brave compeers,
" Worthy of Odin and heaven's martial joys,
" Shall meet no common death abhorr'd, but thrown
" Cover'd with wounds along the gory field,
" Swords high-uplifted in their dying hands,
" Shall yield with smiles of bliss their panting souls,
" Soon borne to Valhall by wing'd messengers
" In glorious cars. While Bards shall ever sing
" Their names, recorded in triumphant strains
" To endless ages. England soon shall feel
" Her conquer'd plains, to other worthier sons
" Allotted, and her fertile regions shar'd
" In equal spoil by heroes fit to sway
" Imperial sceptres, who continuous war
" Provoking, shall enjoy glory and fight
" Eternal. Soon his anxious wish expects
" Return of all the parted legions, wide
' Roaming o'er fields unsack'd, and realms new-won;
" Soon too awaits hosts join'd in fed'ral league

" From Mercia's peopled vales, owning the sway
" Of Kenwulph, tributary King, suborn'd
" Their vassal-slave. Nor dormant was his hope
" Soon o'er yon subject waves to mark the prows
" Of Danish fleets in pomp triumphant glide."

Thus cheering his brave followers, to the King
Heralds arrive, announcing near at hand
Legions approaching o'er the plain's dim verge.

Joy iterates from mouth to mouth: their works
Depos'd, forth issue the thick-swarming troops
To hail their fellow warriors with applause,
By vict'ry won.
As when in some deep vale
From out their labour'd nests, hung o'er the roots
Of ancient oaks that shade some hollow grot,
The wild bees pour innum'rous, lur'd by scent
Of thyme fresh-springing, and with blended noise
Borne shadowy on the noon-tide air serene,
Wake Silence sleeping in her mossy cave.

Bards take their full-strung harps: the aged priests
And holy prophetesses willing join
The glad procession. In the midst aloft
Unroll'd its awful burthen on the wind,
Bright in the sunny glare of radiant noon,
Th' imperial banner, to the fervent eye
Displaying, as it shook, ominous signs
Of exultation. Distant on the sight

Banners responsive gleam'd: coruscant blaz'd
Armour: the din of trumpets from afar
Smote the glad ear, or neigh of steeds, or shout
Triumphant. V. 134—163.

Near advanc'd, a train immense,
Steed-borne, or marching under helms and spears,
Cover'd a flamy tract. Before them wav'd
A snow-white standard, 'mid whose silky folds
The pictur'd war-horse seen, bespoke the troops
Of Amund, princely hero. From the rocks
Of sacred Funen, where the city old
Of Odin lifts her tow'rs, and hears around
Tempests roll'd thund'ring from the Baltic waves;
Or where the Sound torments his foamy isles,
Haughty the warriors came, of stature vast,
In aspect terrible, their tempers wild
And savage as the scenes that nurs'd their bulk.
Selected from their chieftain's rich domains
In many a crowded ship their pow'rs had pass'd,
An ample third of all the fleet immense
That o'er the lab'ring seas to England's coasts
Swarming arriv'd. Before their cloudy van
Borne on his lofty steed, their mighty chief
Came tow'ring, arm'd in threefold brass, o'er which
The hair-clad skin of some wood-monster slain
Grasping the helmet in its wide-op'd jaws
Hung mantling; like that dreadful vest that cloth'd
Alcides, in Nemæan forests torn
By strength resistless from the Lion fell,
Invulnerable to dint of armour, dropt

In vengeance from the Moon's eclipsing orb.
Before the hero blaz'd his sun-like shield,
Whose flamy weight uplift veil'd to the neck
His dreaded form, and with circumference low
Protected half his steed, terrific sway'd,
As that Gorgonian targe, by Pallas borne,
Where hung Medusa's snaky locks, that froze
Th' infatuate gazer into senseless stone.
Pow'rful he mov'd approaching; him behind
The thick ranks, deep-advancing, glar'd: he seem'd
Likest the sable spirit of the storm
That leads at midnight o'er the shrinking sea
His fire-edg'd clouds, whose wombs o'ercharg'd explode
Incontinent meteors. Him th' admiring crowds
Welcome aloud, and wave their helms. The Bards
Strike full their sounding harps, and pour the song.

"Hail! Amund, great and brave, thunder of war,
Come on thy fiery steed, welcome to feasts
Of Heroes, songs of Bards, and Virgins' smiles.
Satiate of slaughter, Vict'ry sleeps awhile
In her hot blood-dash'd car, and gives the reins
To her tir'd charioteers. All have beheld
Thy prowess: all adore the valiant: none
Praises the coward: heroes from their sight
Chase him who flies in battle. But thy arm
Hurl'd storms amid the flying ranks, more fierce
Than winds that rock Norwegian hills, and burst
Sea-hollow'd caverns. Mightiest Thor survey'd
Thy spear far-shot, and deem'd the thunder's bolt

Had scap'd his belt of pow'r, whose touch dejects
Mountains with all their woods, and in the sea
Uprears new islands. Heav'n's almighty King,
Odin, All-Father, in his flamy car
By tygers drawn, high-seated, mark'd thy deeds,
As on thy snorting steed, whose nostrils smok'd
Pestilence, thro' the shrinking foes thy sword
Rag'd in the shock of bucklers, while thy voice
Louder than ocean, lifted to the stars,
Hearten'd thy thousands in the paths of death.
Then Valhall's Prince omnipotent with joy
Pointed thy course to Frea, his great Queen,
Whose equal empire shares with him the slain,
And bade his winged Valkyries, aloft
Hov'ring to chuse the brave, see and admire
Thy furious devastation. Thee they hail'd
With glad acclaim, the chief who for heav'n's Sire
Strews fields with heroes, and his foes in heaps
Leaves as a smoking feast for ravenous kites,
That lur'd by scent of slaughter from afar
Wade o'er the blood-soft battle-field, and glut
Their hungry beaks in flesh; a living tomb,
With stride imperious stalking o'er the dead.
Lo! at thy bold approach, the holy bird
Flapping his sable wings, utters proud joy
And shakes the fated standard with delight.
Hail! warrior, worthy in immortal fame
Glorious to live: awhile to fight on earth,
England's abhorred terror; then to die
In the grim press of slaughter, sword in hand,

A hero's welcome death: thence soon upborne
In Odin's car to his wide-glitt'ring halls.
Heroes, thy Fathers, from their brilliant thrones
Rising shall greet thee. All Valhalla's Bards
Shall strike their choral symphonies, and lift
Thy name, co-equal to assembled Gods."

Priests and the sacred prophetesses bend
Lowly before the chief, and lead the way
Full to the camp, amid the martial noise
Of harps, and trumpets, clarions, and the roar
Of bellowing drums. The hero bending hails
The vast procession with obeisance meek,
And greets the Bards. Under the wavy shade
Of flapping banners came the legion host
Of Amund, bearing high on thronging steeds
Vast-knotted clubs, huge battle-axes, spears
Or falchions, gory red; and from the belts
Of many hung terrific scalps of slain
And hollow'd skulls, gold-edg'd, now festal cups
To pass the flowing hydromel. Behind
Slow mov'd a captive train of warriors, ta'en
In battle. As they come, the King with joy
Welcomes the stranger troops. In various tents
Prepar'd, the captive warrior-train are shut
In dim imprisonment, by Danish minds
Deem'd direst vengeance, to whose ignominy
And stain eternal preferable seem'd
Cruellest death.

These thus dispos'd, behold!

Full near advanc'd, other new bands appear,
Whose radiant arms and purpled banners far
Crimson'd the fields around. Martial they came, V. 252—279.
Nor long unknown. Bards mark'd the floating pomp,
And knew the Brothers of the fated three,
Whose sacred hands the magic Reafen wove,
Hinguar and Hubba, praise of noblest scalds,
With auburn locks.—They from the piny hills
Of Zealand had conjoin'd their vassal pow'rs,
Skill'd or to wield in fight the missive spear
Or steer frail barks across tempestuous seas.
Soon as the crowds observ'd the eagle-forms,
That on their pennons toss'd, the Bards address
With open tones of joy the Sisters three,
Standing with rapt awe near the mystic sign.
" Prophetic oracles of good or ill,
Whom chiefs adore, and dare no enterprize,
You unconsulted, yonder lo! in air
Sail the blue banners of your brother chiefs,
Glitt'ring as shines the rainbow in dark clouds,
Heaven's fiery bridge. Hail them with song: the Bards
Shall add at feasts their iterated praise."

Nor unresponsive mov'd, in snow-white robes
Advancing underneath the dread expanse
Of the broad Reafen, the majestic three.

" Bounding on foamy steeds, see! shouting hosts
Follow, rejoicing in their pow'r, elate
In vict'ry, Hinguar, of tumultuous war

Bulwark, and near him, Hubba, princely sons
Of the same Sire, Regner, the brave, the wise,
King of fall'n armies! Loftily they sit
Like Thor, high God of thunder, in his car
Returning to his palace in mid-air,
Victorious from dread battles with the foes
Of heav'n. Hail! sons of Regner, who has died
Laughing. Hail! worthy of your Sire. The Gods
Smile on your deeds, and know you fit to stand
On that tremendous day full in the front
Of hosts celestial, when the worlds beneath
Shall render up their habitants, and whelm
Gods and creation. Not in age, or beds
Of sickness, ye shall end your noble lives;
For Odin claims you. Never have ye fled
In battle. All your noble wounds appear
Wide-gash'd in front. Struck thro' the riven heart
Ye in the tempest of the fight shall gasp
Your latest souls, and raise aloft your swords,
Pledge of eternal bliss. We, Sisters three,
Gifted by Heav'n to know the fates unborn
Of men; who call by charms of Runic verse
Ghosts from their hilly tombs, aghast to ope
Deeds of futurity; we who converse
With spirits various that animate
Nature thro' all her works: who tell the names,
The will, the attributes of ev'ry God,
Thus prophesy. Enjoy the feast: indulge
In riots: feast on Virgins' smiles. No toils,
Save those of war, should stain a hero's fame.

Short is the tomb-doom'd warrior's glorious life." Book III.

Complacent to the chiefs the strains arose. V. 310—339.
They on their azure shields display'd aloft
The image of their kingly Father, stretch'd
In agony, but o'er whose livid face
Smiles beam'd of thrilling joy. Their train immense
Of hardy warriors swift advanc'd, and struck
Their sounding targes. Amid low-brow'd caves
Oft had their blue shields gleam'd, and twanging bows
Shot far the growling monsters, so inur'd
To toils and perils.
Following these with spoil
And force tumultuous, mighty Haldene rode
Ardent for glory. After him appear'd
Frena and Sidroc, names of pow'r, whose souls
Glowing with equal rage of war, sought high
Distinction, to their Sov'reign Chief devote
With zealous loyalty. Bards tune their fame
With fervor. Guthrun welcomes all with arms
Outstretch'd, and tow'rd the camp prepares
To lead their moving train, 'mid whom unseen
Oskital, second chief, his dubious mind
The sov'reign Gen'ral opes, questioning all
What cause delays the hero. Amund soon
Sternly responding tells:
"Of spoil so fond
And rapine, treasures still unsatisfied
Amassing avaricious, can we doubt
Why last we hail his steps, who still prefers

Plunder to gen'rous feasts, and bold converse
Of heroes, and the rapt'rous song of Bards?
Not till incumber'd with the ruin'd waste
Of countries, shall we greet his weary pow'rs."

This said, strait onward to the stately tents
The legions bend their course, where soon dispos'd,
Joyful the troops admire their Sov'reign's skill,
The spacious structures, the commanding scite
Of their wide camp, opportune for attack
Or sure defence; wand'ring mid objects new
Delighted. Much the counsel they applaud
Of Oskital; whose thought had first propos'd
Breach of the fed'ral league, and spurn'd a peace,
Ignoble and compulsory.
Ere long
By high command the mingling hosts prepare
A solemn Sacrifice to fav'ring Gods.
In sacred place with holy care are rais'd
Altars, and victims from the lowing spoil
Select are led, adorn'd.
Which rites begun,
Appear, ascending o'er the adjacent hill,
Oskital's flamy banners, rolling wide
The pictur'd wolves. His dreadful ensign knew
Th' expectant Bards, and from the busied camp
Forth issue gratulant. The train immense
Slowly advanc'd, laden with spoil: a host
On mighty steeds borne eminent, select
From Sleswick's fruitful plains, or where the lake

Of Ploen o'er the wild morasses rolls
Her cloudy mists, or from the sea-dash'd isles,
Laland or Femeren, where continuous storms
Roar thro' their piny forests. Crowded ships
Thro' tempests driv'n had brought their banded pow'rs,
Bound in strict vow never from England's shores
Defeated to return, or seek again
Their homes, devote to fires. Now come they on,
Led by their savage chief, whose mail'd aspect,
As dark he rode, reining his foamy steed,
Terror diffus'd around. His dreadful shape
Was veil'd from sight, and o'er his sullen brows
Hung the low helm. Pond'rous his armour seem'd
Both spear and shield, o'er his gigantic limbs
Diffus'd.—Behind of answering stature rode
His many banded legions. Mid their crowds
Appear'd a captive train of aged Priests,
Gash'd o'er with wounds, from monasteries torn
Homes once of still and holy rest, devote
To science; but with sacrilegious fires
Burnt, and with murder stain'd. Old peasants there
Beside their wives and decent matrons mov'd,
Who to their fear-chill'd breasts with downcast look
Prest their scar'd infants: Virgins all aghast
Pass'd silent, dreading from the savage foe
Dishonour more than death. With these spoil large
Of flocks, and steeds, and oxen from the plough
Unloos'd, and various forage from the stores
Of thrifty husbandry, in throng'd array
Went slow, and fill'd afar th' extended rear.

Approach'd the tents, Oskital soon accosts
The Sov'reign Chief, with stern and sullen eye
Fix'd on him fierce. "Why early thus are hosts
Summon'd to join the new-form'd camp, nor space
Giv'n for accustom'd spoil, and to secure
The treasures of the foe, the due reward
Of vict'ry, plann'd by other minds than those
Assuming empire here? Fool I! who led
Over the stormy main my pow'rful fleet
Conjunct in servile fealty, from me won
By treach'rous promises, unkept, of pow'r
And countless riches, as the glorious meed
Of high obedience. Had we come alone,
England ere this were conquer'd. No weak leagues
Respite had lent to peace; or, yielded, long
Observ'd; nor idle fears of angry Gods
Stopt vict'ry in mid battle, and career
Of certain triumph. But smooth words have won
Other our station, and the loss is our's."

To him the Sov'reign Leader answer'd mild.
"Oskital, great and brave, in wealth and pow'r,
High-eminent, compose these fancied wrongs,
And mix with heroes, leagued to share rewards,
Promis'd, and won in part, and of themselves
Worthy. Enough of time remains in wars
Endless to gain high honour, both on earth
And afterward in heav'n, and to subdue
The realms of England, and her wealthy plains
Apportion as our own. Thy pow'rs conjoin'd

In disciplin'd obedience, from thy state
And dignity nought derogate, but much
Augment, else wild and to destruction sure
Devote. The will of Gods short interval
Of peace denies not: and in mid career
Of vict'ry by behest inscrutable,
(As late we saw) may bid the streaming sword
Pause from its office, and the falling ranks
Spare for fresh fields of honourable fame.
But perj'ry I abhor. Would some just cause
Had broke our latest league, and not alone
Thy counsel, as I deem, too soon approv'd!
For sure thou know'st, the gods, the hero-train,
Detest the perjur'd, doom'd by fate's decree
To float eternally in pois'nous floods:
While Gimlé's heav'n-built regions shall receive
Within her radiant palaces the just
And good, to dwell thro' never-ending time.
Therefore, as best beseems a hero, rest
Content with present spoil; for future wars
Prepare, and please the Gods. Enter, and share
Honour, and company of noble Chiefs.—"

He ceas'd, and his persuasion thus adjoins
Amund. "Why, Oskital, thus still complain
Of spoil inadequate, and thus delight
Wealth unenjoy'd to heap, and leave unshar'd
And unenjoy'd, feasts after dang'rous fight,
Converse of heroes, and the praise of Bards?
Why ever brood thy thoughts on themes beyond

The present moment? Enter, and enjoy
Present delights. Inexorable fate
Has fix'd to each his hour. In battle brave,
That ended, what becomes the hero-train
But festal joys, mead, and the song of fame?"

V. 458—486.

Appeas'd, the sullen warrior tow'rd his tent
Mov'd silent. Thro' the camp the Sov'reign King
Issues swift heralds, bearing high command,
That all th' embodied host at station due
Assemble strait to hear the warning voice
Of their prime leaders, and to fav'ring Gods
Pay holy sacrifice. Immediate all
The wide-spread camp presents one moving scene
Of steel-clad warriors throng'd in deep array,
From ev'ry side commingling tow'rd the spot
Appointed. Helms and spears conjunct around
In wavy motion stretch'd their bright expanse,
As the calm'd ocean spreads his quiv'ring waves
Around some tranquil isle.
High in the midst
Guthrun, and Oskital, and Amund, stood
On lofty altars rais'd; and round survey'd
Their hosts innumerable, not as yet
Augmented by the summon'd rebel pow'rs
Of haughty Kenwulph, nor the mighty bands
Left by the shores of Wareham to escort
Hither their potent fleets: yet num'rous these
Present around, as those collected hosts
Whom that far-fam'd Mogul, great Aurengzebe,

(Lur'd by the massy and eye-dazzling gems
Dug from Golconda's mines) burning for spoil,
Led o'er her wide dominions, and the realms
Of Indian Rajahs from the precious hills
Conquered to Comorin's Southern Cape, that lifts
His promontory into bounding seas.

Beside the Sov'reign King in circling space
Altars appear'd, near which a female train
Stood, and the Bards in flowing vests, the Priests,
And holy Prophetesses. Silence soon
Reigning around, th' emotions of his soul
Thus, to the host imperial Guthrun spoke.

" Danes, valiant countrymen, heav'n's King Supreme,
Odin, has blest our battle. Now in lieu
Of peaceful leagues and purpose to return
Homeward awhile, our arms have won fresh pow'r
And main advantage, so that now we call
England our home, hence never to depart
But own and rule this fertile isle. A place
Worthy of Heroes, and sure well-exchang'd
For rocks, and stormy isles, bleak barren wilds,
And howling forests, where our native homes
Late stood, ere we to vengeful flames resign'd
The mansions mean; signal that fix'd abode
We there would never hold. There life pass'd on
In peace inglorious and the chase of beasts.
Here we enjoy pursuits worthy alone
Of heroes: battles with a race devote

To some mean, weak beliefs, studious of peace
And humble arts, of Odin and the Gods
Ignorant Infidels; and therefore doom'd
To extirpation.—Gods have giv'n the strong
Right to subdue the weak and o'er them rule,
Fav'ring the pow'rful. Here our cause is war,
Eternal war, where heroes can expire
Pierc'd on the gory field, swords in their hands,
Soon thence transported to the splendid halls
Of heav'n's high King. Not dying, as at home
By sickness or old age, and therefore doom'd
To Hela's dread abodes, which to escape,
At home necessity impels us ask
The pitying hand of brother, son, or friend,
On our mail'd breast to strike the mortal blow,
And send us, cloth'd in armour, to partake
Valhalla's joys, thus purchas'd.—Or perhaps
Our own shrunk, feeble arm must lend the sword
Its fatal stroke; or led to some high steep,
Thence thrown, and dash'd to atoms, we must win
Half-glorious entrance to heav'n's palaces.—
But here we die, as every hero longs,
Yielding the soul amid the iron storm
Of battle, and the roaring shock of arms,
In the deep bath of blood. What is the fate,
Glorious and envied, of the hero-train
But to fall, pierc'd with thousand wounds, amid
The thickest war? Then Odin joyful sends
His winged Valkyries, to lift to heav'n
On beamy cars or fiery-flying steeds

The dying brave, smiling in agony.
For well we know we part to dwell 'mid joys
Unspeakable, still new, with heroes chos'n
Of old, with them to share, battles and feasts
In Valhall's azure plains and golden domes.
We groan not, nor retire from certain wounds
In battle, but with joy encounter death.
While our weak foes, objects of pity, lost
To sense of Odin and heav'n's martial joys,
Groan amid pain, nor willing court their death,
Preferring quiet and toilsome industry,
To war and wounds: and therefore never call'd
To share heav'n's joys and dangers, inexpert
In both, but doom'd to the tremendous world
Niflheimer. But for us, Bards will record
Our names on earth to time's remotest verge,
While we above in Odin's happy halls
Shall share rewards, which no hard toils, no deaths,
Torments, or dangers, are of price too high
Thus to ensure. With Gods to dwell in heav'n,
To fight conspicuous in proud tournaments,
Then safe-returning, ev'ry wound quick heal'd,
To sit in palaces at gorgeous feasts
Quaffing immortal mead from skulls of foes
Slain by our arm on earth, survey'd by him
Th' imperial Sire of Gods and men, who rules
Whatever high in heav'n or mean below
Awes, or escapes, the sight. Thus shall we spend
An interval of ages, till that day
Terrific, doom'd of old, which not ev'n Gods

Contemplate without horror and deep awe,
When all heav'n's ancient foes from various worlds
Shall join their horrid legions, and invade
The realms of Gods. Then glory still remains,
Highest and greatest, to defend heav'n's King
And his celestial pow'rs. What raptures then
Must swell our souls, when Odin shall select
Warriors, most brave and bold, aptest for fight,
In front to stand along his sun-bright ranks,
Infinite in dimension, as in pow'r
Unconquerable, to contend unhurt
With nature's final enemies, when Gods
By fate's decree must perish, and this frame
Of heav'n and earth fall amid boundless flames,
Borne by the Giant Surtur from his world
Of fire, foredoom'd of eldest time to end
Creation. Then a happier place shall rise
From mid the ruins of the blazing worlds,
The splendid Gimlé, destin'd by that pow'r
The Silent and Invisible, Prime Cause,
To be eternally the blest abode
Of heroes brave and good. Who can revolve
These thoughts entrancing, and not burn for war
And death in battle? Honour all belongs
To bloody fight. Cowards who flee from death,
Conscious of these rewards, we justly deem
Worthless of brave society, and hold
All-ignominious. Such must never more
Appear with human kind, but hated flee
To dens and solitary caves, and there

Pine out their miserable life with beasts,
Fittest companions. Gods and men disown
The wretch, whom after death pale Hela claims
To dwell with serpents and her shadowy Ghosts.
Here then our legions fix the lasting home
Of us and all our race, for endless wars
Prepar'd, and winning thus immortal joys."

He ceas'd, and in applause the circling throng
Rung on their bossy shields their furious spears,
Madd'ning for battle. Distant hills the roar
Reverberate, and echoing woods around
Start, hush'd to trembling silence. Fear no less
Alarms Trinacria's regions, when within
The darken'd Ætna, (subterranean winds
Or waters urging way) with thund'rous noise
Earthquakes explode, and burst his fiery veins
And sulph'rous caves afar, that many a league
Totter both sea and land. Their martial mien
Gladden'd the sov'reign chiefs, and now at last
Compos'd, to them his outstretch'd spear high-wav'd,
Oskital next the heartening speech resumes.

"Warriors and countrymen, now ye behold
Triumph attend the well-concerted scheme
Of leagues ignoble violate, and fields
Won by your daring valour, which disdain'd
Vows madly pledg'd. Let none that bold design
Brand with the name of perjury, which I
Call laudable assertion of our pow'r,

By any means atchiev'd, and dare avow
Our right to waste this realm, her spacious plains
To portion as our own, and all her race
To rule as vassals. My deep-learn'd colleague,
The kingly Guthrun, in impassion'd words
Truly and well the great and proud rewards
Prepar'd for valour by the Gods in heav'n,
Unfolds to view. Yet more untold remains.
Beside these glorious meeds, we reap on earth
Spoil, and insatiate slaughter, and the wealth
Amass'd of ravag'd cities: provinces
Pillag'd and shar'd, to ev'ry man dispos'd
His proper part: whence riches also crown
Deeds of immortal praise. Commanding trains
Of slaves attendant on your beck, and ranks
Of martial steeds, and pomp of war: around
To cast the eye, and view the rich domains
And splendid domes, your own, and to your sway
Subject, a proud inheritance, that claims
Deep awe from all, to you, and to your sons
Down to posterity, who of their sires
Worthy, may range at large, and o'er th' extent
Of England's wealthy regions exercise
Lordly dominion: and the native race
Call forth at pleasure in devoted ranks
To bide the shock of battle and forc'd war,
Victims of slaughter, or in thronging trains
To swell imperial state—These high delights
Scarce second to celestial joys, on earth
Crown the victorious fields, destin'd for you."

He spoke, and scarce less furious clangor rung
Hideous applause, than when their Sov'reign chief
Told of Valhalla's glories. Amund next
His manly form erecting, and around
His speaking eye quick-thrown, with noble mien.
Thus to the troops his heart-warm thoughts exprest.

" Heroes, friends, countrymen, you hear the joys
Reserv'd for valour, and your gen'rous souls
Know well the raptures, that the glorious toil
Of arms repay, and for itself endear
War worthy all observance. No mean cares
Can stain a hero's fame, whose only joy
Is still the bloody field, and after fight
Ease and convivial mirth. The Gods have doom'd
To each his end, and Fates immutable
Know each man's hour. No mortal pow'r can change
Destiny. Wherefore then the name of fear?
By women scoff'd and babes. When battles rage,
Then does the hero thro' the press of death
And fiercest slaughter move unterrified,
His mad steed plunging thro' deep gore, while ranks
Fall underneath his arm, or fly aghast
The thunder of his aspect. He by all
Observ'd and proud-exalted, firm leads on
Thro' paths of dearest danger, worthy sole
Glory proportionate to valour, high-
Excelling, full-resolv'd singly to face
In desp'rate fight five enemies, nor shrink
Tho' press'd on ev'ry side from certain death,

Welcom'd with smiles. So no captivity
Can ever taint his honour, winning still
Victory or proud end: pleasures on earth,
If so decreed, or endless joys in heav'n.
Dying, the Bards receive his honour'd name
In never-dying song, to all the brave
Example high, and boast: while he above
Revels with Gods, and fights celestial fields.
If spar'd for future war, delicious joys
Await the battle ended. Splendid feasts
With chiefs and heroes: all the raptur'd night
To quaff bright mead from gold-tipt skulls, and wake
Jovial festivity: to list the song
Rais'd joyous by the Bards, and harps deep-touch'd
To melting harmony: to lie at ease
Exempt from toil and ev'ry care, and hear
Praises from ev'ry mouth: kindly caress'd
By virgin beauty, whose bewitching smiles
Bend sole on him who shines in valourous deeds.
These joys sole bless the brave. Unnotic'd stays
The coward, and no virgins on him smile,
But hate him, and their hands in wedded love
Refuse. No songs record his name obscure,
Mark'd but by scorn. Chiefs therefore by great deeds
Should win distinction, and example high
Hold to their following pow'rs: hence emulous
In noble acts each other to excel
And equal their bold leader. Oh! delights!
Cheaply obtain'd by warlike toils, themselves
Worthy all praise, and wounds, and agony

Unfelt of dying, crown'd by such rewards."

He ended here, and rous'd to highest rage
The troops all burn for battle, and to gain
Pleasures in earth and heav'n, and love of Gods
Eternal. Flush'd with triumph, now they vow
Wars never ending with their dastard foes,
And deeds of fiercest import.
Guthrun bids
Begin the holy sacrifice, while Bards
Prepare the songs of glory to the Gods.
All hear exulting; and devoutest love
Of their high gen'rals swelling ev'ry breast,
Tow'rd them they press, and offer uncontroll'd
The wonted honour, signal of respect
Greatest and first, aloft on seats adorn'd
To bear the steel-clad chiefs, admir'd from far.
'Mid shouts and clashing armour, standards roll
Numberless o'er the helms and wavy spears
That deck the circling host. Onward they bear
The far-hail'd leaders tow'rd the sacred spot
Ordain'd for sacrifice, where altars lift
Their pillar'd bulk erect, by mounds uprais'd
Conspicuous far. Here throng the sacred Bards
In princely robes, and venerable trains
Of Priests to each God consecrate, while rang'd
Beneath the magic Reafen, rolling wide
Its broad and awful burden in deep shades,
Th' inspired Dames, like marble-statues, stand
Eyeing with fixed gaze the holy form.

The Sov'reign Chiefs beside the lofty mounds
Demand their honour'd station, whence to hear
And mark at full the pious rites. Around
The thronging army press: at distance due
A circling range of stones the sacred space
Inclos'd, and tumult all withheld. Uprais'd
High in the midst a mighty spear to all
Beckon'd the scene that all observance claim'd.

Solemn attention reigns, and Silence seems
Ev'n with herself deep-aw'd. The rites begin.
First, the chief-honour'd band of holy Priests
Devote to mightiest Odin, slow-advance
Tow'rd the broad altar, on three columns high
Of unwrought stone triangular dispos'd,
Under whose canopy a deep, vast well
Op'd its black jaws, receptacle prepar'd
For parts of slaughter'd victims. Hither now
With garlands deck'd, the sacrifice is led
A warhorse, two fierce dogs, two cocks, two hawks—
With sacred veneration by the Chiefs
Observ'd, the Priests inflict the mortal stroke;
Ejaculating, "Thus I send thee doom'd
To Odin." Vessels catch the purple flood,
Whose currents swift, ey'd by the holy train,
Augur prosperity. On all around,
Themselves, the Sov'reigns, Bards, the holy Dames,
And circling troops, the Priests besprinkle blood.
Then scan th' unfolded entrails with keen gaze,
Foretelling happy omens. They dissect

The parted flesh, and o'er the altar lay
Half of each victim, th' other part deep-sent
Down to th' accustom'd gulf. Then holy fire
Struck from pure, unus'd flints the sacred pile
Lights, and consumes the sacrifice: aloft
The smoke ascends, glad presage. Which observ'd,
The sov'reign Guthrun bids three raptur'd Bards
Devote to Odin, strike their ready harps
To hymns of martial tone: and sing in turn,
First of the System of the various worlds
And attributes of Gods: next, of the foes
Of Nature that thro' various space exist:
And last, the destiny of Gods and men
And consummation, long foreknown, of all.
Successively advanc'd, the bards pour loud
With eyes full-fix'd on heav'n, the song of praise.

V. 790—803.

" Odin, All-father, Heav'n's omnipotent,
Lord of the ages, Governor of worlds,
Or what magnific titles more attract
Thine ear, great God of battles, from thy throne
Bright Lidscialfa, terror of all realms,
Illustrious where thou sitt'st in highest heav'n
From whence at one vast boundless glance, thou see'st
All worlds, creation's universal scheme,
Deign to observe thy vot'ries, and receive
Our humble praises and meek offerings, signs
Of prostrate awe and heart-warm gratitude.
Enshrin'd in glory inaccessible
Thou, looking down from heav'n, view'st far below,

Hung 'mid th' ætherial vault, the flamy sun,
Moon, and th' innumerable host of stars;
And lower, floating 'mid th' abyss of air V. 809—838.
Fathomless, pure, of genial temp'rature,
Our earth, the vessel of the ages, round
Encompass'd by her ocean. Then thou see'st
Far-heap'd beyond earth's northern verge, a world
Of darkness, ice, and storms, thro' which transpierc'd
Rivers roll poison in terrific floods,
The dismal realms of Hela, Queen of death,
Niflheimer nam'd: for cowards and bad men
The doom'd abode. From off this hideous world
Launch'd o'er th' expanse of air, hence northern blasts
Bring on their icy wings, cold, hail, and roar
Of mighty storms, that rend the earth and sea.
But on the opposite extreme, beyond
Earth's southern verge, thy turning glance beholds
A dreadful world of fire, by mortal men
Nam'd Muspelsheim, prime matter whence the sun
And all the heav'nly fires had birth, where rules
Surtur the vast, and in his empire old,
Constrains its flamy habitants, foreknown
The fiercest foes of Gods. Hence southern winds
From these hot regions o'er the earth diffuse
Warmth and mild vapours. Then o'er all the heav'n
Turns thy swift eye, whose glance undazzled views
Splendor ineffable, and glorious shine
Of heav'n's bright cities, the proud majesty
Of high Breidalbik, Glitner flaming wide
Of gold, and Alfheim, and Valascialf

The great and royal, of pure silver rais'd,
And sun-bright Gimlé, destin'd to endure
Eternal. Thou amid these fulgent states
See'st all the Gods in radiant synod meet:
First Thor, the thund'rer, him whose empire sways
The boundless air.—Balder, thy second birth,
Whose fulgent visage darts celestial rays,
The beauteous Deity, belov'd by all,
Eloquent and benign:—Niord, the mighty God,
Whose pow'r controuls the ocean and its storms,
Rich, and to whom he loves, potent to give
Kingdoms and treasures.—Next intrepid Tyr
Stalks proud, by warriors oft invok'd, the God
For valour fam'd and prudence. Bragé there
Majestic moves, and tunes his sacred harp,
God of poetic lays, whose wisdom joins
Apt eloquence. There potent Heimdal dwells
The sentinel of heav'n, whose trumpet sounds
Thro' all the worlds; and from his kingly fort,
Built on heav'n's fiery bridge, Bifrost, which men
Surname the Rainbow, his keen eye quick-throws
Numberless leagues around, destin'd to guard
Heav'n's entrance from her Giant-foes. There move
Vidar the silent, Vali, archer skill'd,
Uller the active, God of single fight:
And splendid numbers of less pow'rful Gods;
With all the Goddess train, Frea, bright Queen
Of heav'n, thy regal consort, whose high rule
Earth also grateful owns. Then Freya, next
In honour, beauty's Queen, by Oder left

Her fickle Paramour, whom now she seeks
Thro' ev'ry clime and from her eyes distils
Tears of pure gold. Eira, who stately claims
Her office high, Physician to the Gods,
Copied by noblest dames. Gefion the fair,
Lover of chastity. Siona, good,
Whose gen'rous care 'twixt angry lovers breathes
Harmonious concord: and, companion meet,
Vara severe, whose conscious thoughts observe
The lover's promise, and exact the vow.
There moves conspicuous, Gna, the messenger
Of heav'n's imperial Queen, whose flying steed
Sails thro' the boundless air with light'ning haste
Or o'er the waves. With all th' innumerous band
Of Goddess-Valkyries, whose office proud
Is giv'n to grace Valhalla's splendid halls
And from the gold-tipt skulls with lib'ral hand
To pour celestial mead, at feasts divine.
Others on fiery steeds, or radiant cars,
With awful embassy to chuse the slain,
And give the poise to victory. Here is seen,
Bragé's fair spouse, Iduna, she who bears
The fruit delicious, ate by Gods, whose taste
Restores perpetual youth. And here the Fates,
Urda the past, Verdandi, present Queen,
Schulda, the future, holy Sisters three,
Keep residence beneath the wond'rous ash
Great Ydrasil, whose boundless-stretching roots,
Parted from heav'n, o'ershadow and connect
All worlds. These weave the doom of each man born.

V. 869—898.

With awful terrors, and his destiny
Transmit to thee, Almighty Father, borne
Swift by their silent Ravens, whom they send
Daily round ev'ry world, till at thine ear,
Night shews them whisp'ring ever of events
Soon to arrive. But thou, deep-boding King,
All these celestial glories, and the vast
Connected universe, with keen regret
Surveyest, conscious of their final fate,
And mournful pond'ring still, that all must end
In hideous ruin, on that fated day,
When nature's enemies, pre-doom'd of old,
Shall burst their chains, and from their various worlds
Assembling shall invade heav'n's highest realms
With terrors irresistible. Thine eye
Turns then, alarm'd, on these dread foes, dispers'd
Throughout creation, tho' confin'd, or bound,
Till fated time shall summon them to war."

Ceas'd now the Bard; with agitated look
He turns tow'rd his compeer, who stood with mien
Trembling, aghast, while he prepar'd to name
The horrid foes of nature. Guthrun marks
His tranced frame and calls aloud. "Fear not;
Heroes shall live that dare to face these foes;
And from their grasp defend the shrinking Gods
And falling heav'n; declare their hideous powr's."

Then thus with harp and song the sacred Bard.

" God of the ravens, all-surpassing King,
Father of slaughter, Odin, we recount
With holy awe, thy fated enemies.
Chief, in that fiery world, dread Muspelsheim,
The mighty Giant-brood, glowing as flame,
By Surtur rul'd, black Demon, whose vast hand
Sways his proud sword, sceptred as with a sun.
Next, underneath the earth, ranging at large
Amid the pure abyss of air, the race
Pow'rful and huge, the Giants of the frost,
Form'd of the gelid drops, from the cold north
Blown, and here mixing with the genial warmth
Borne from the south, impregn'd with breath of life.
Then, on the earth, within his cavern vast
Shut, and three pond'rous mountains o'er him prest,
And bound in ninefold iron chains, dread Loke,
That Evil Principle, Father of Fraud,
Foe and disgrace of Gods and men, who here,
A vast-suspended serpent on his head
Dropping continuous venom, horrid howls
In agony, and turning his huge bulk
Shakes the firm earth, that his concussions men
Name earthquakes. Next the threefold progeny
Of Loke, all monsters like himself, whom Gods
Not unappall'd behold, tho' separate now
In bonds: first low amid earth's central womb,
Chain'd to a mountain's roots, th' enormous Wolf
Fenris, thro' whose vast jaws the sword of Tyr
Pierc'd, tortures him with never ceasing pain,
That from his mouth a foaming river flows,

Surnam'd by men, the Vices. Next within
The boundless ocean sunk, the Serpent huge
Midgard, who his tremendous body twines
Round all earth's globe, and in his jaws immense
Seizing his tail, there horrid-rolling bids
Tempests afflict the sea, by mortal men
Nam'd Sin. And last, Hela, the Queen of death,
Loke's hideous offspring, in her own dark world
Reigning o'er shrieking ghosts and spectred shapes,
That mournful wander thro' Niflheimer's caves
Of woe and pain. Then on the Gods thou bend'st
Thy sage and prudent look, and know'st them all,
Ev'n all their pow'r conjunct, inadequate
Against such dreadful foes, and know'st it thence
Needful to fetch from earth to highest heav'n,
Heroes, the bravest of earth's sons, to aid
Gods in their dang'rous charge, and guard, allied,
Heav'n from her Giant-foes, and Loke's fell brood,
Lest bursting their vast dungeons, ere their time,
Irruent they force heav'n's citadels, and wrest
Celestial glories from their rightful King.
Therefore, on earth battles and endless wars
Delight thee; school of heroes, where in proof
Their valour may appear, and bold deeds shine
In full conspicuous trial. Thou ordain'st
Brave death in gory battle, sword in hand,
Sole test of merit, summon'd to defend
Heav'n's empire from her foes, and class'd with Gods
To share their feasts and by their sides contend.
Therefore to earthly battles thou descend'st,

Shrin'd in celestial glories, on thy car
Sun-bright, by tygers drawn, to mark where chief
Rages the press of slaughter, thence to chuse
The bravest warriors slain, members most fit
To grace Valhalla's legions. Thou delight'st
When all the field is heap'd with dying chiefs
Smiling in agony, for then thou know'st
Numbers new-chosen join thy warrior-bands.
Need hast thou, (as thou know'st) there to array
Innumerable hosts, nor pow'r of worlds
Would prove superfluous. So thy Valkyries
Perform their awful office, and select
Whom they deem worthiest, lifting them in cars
Aloft thro' skies to heav'n's cerulean fields."

He ceas'd: for now the Sov'reign Guthrun call'd,
Delighted—"Oh! extatic hope!—approach,
Thou last revered Bard of Heav'n's Supreme,
Strike the loud harp, and tell what joys await
Heroes in heav'n, and the predestin'd doom
Of all supernal and terrestrial things;
Themes far surpassing ev'ry mortal thought."

Struck his deep harp th' impatient Bard and sung.

"See! from their splendid thrones the Gods arise
In honour, as with war-steeds and the trains,
Who with them faithful died, Heroes assume
Their seats in Valhall's palaces, proud-rais'd
Amid the star-pav'd heav'n, whose lofty roofs

Are hung from end to end with golden shields,
Armour, and martial trophies. Here they live
In crowds unnumber'd, and increasing still,
Feasting on flesh of boars and sparkling mead,
While harps and song roll music's swelling tide,
And Heav'n's Omnipotent partakes their joy.—
Ended the feasts, the countless crowds arise,
And sally from the halls in wide array,
Arm'd various, till in martial ranks dispos'd
Begins the pomp of battle, and display
Of splendid tournaments. Admiring Gods
Throng round, spectators. Shields celestial ring,
Arms clash, and all th' illimitable heav'n
Roars with the shock of battle. Thousands fall
Pierc'd, and the boundless fields are strown with slain;
Till the fight ceasing, and the custom'd hour
Of due repast arriv'd, lo! all uprise
Safe and unhurt, and join the warrior-train,
Returning to enjoy deserv'd regale,
On mighty tables 'mid gold-flaming domes.
These are thy glorious meeds, Parent divine,
Prepar'd for heroes, fated to endure
That total interval of destin'd time
Till dawns the day, tremendous to conceive,
Twilight of Gods, when all heav'n's ancient foes,
Knowing the long-doom'd season spent, at once
Shall burst their self-op'd barriers, and assail
Heav'n's tow'rs, with aggregated hosts and pow'rs
Invincible. Remain for heroes then
Dangers the last, but highest, and rewards

V: 1004—1033

Equivalent; nor less, than in array
To stand with Gods, and heav'n's wide frontiers shield
From fiery legions, upward-mounting fierce
With arms of inextinguishable flames
Shot wide with desolating rage and pow'r
Omnipotent, and poisonous rivers roll'd
From Midgard's gulfy jaws, and sulph'rous clouds
Breath'd high by savage Fenris, whose fell touch
Scorching shall blast all strength. While far below
Ocean uprising o'er his highest shores
Shall deluge all the earth. In vain fate's doom
Irrevocable, Gods or heroes strive
Now to oppose. For Surtur's flaming hosts
Ascend, and fires unquenchable destroy
Heav'n's glittering pomp, and o'er creation roll
Hot devastation, and consume all worlds.
Perish the Gods themselves, each by his foe
In destin'd fight. The pillar'd universe
Falls in tremendous ruin, elements
With elements commingling. Heroes still
Survive, with him, the God Invisible,
First Cause, while from the blazing waste of worlds
The radiant Gimlé lifts her golden tow'rs,
Th' eternal residence ordain'd of old
For all the brave, and good, thro' endless time.
New earth and heav'n at last shall rise, and scenes
Impenetrable yet to wisest thoughts.
Then for the wicked, coward, perjur'd race
Of men, dire mansions still survive, the shores
Hideous of fell Nastrandé, far-remote

V. 1034—1063

From light, where serpents vomit poisonous floods,
In which their tortur'd careases must float
Eternally, shut out from hope and rest,
And oft imploring final death in vain.
Oh! then, plenipotent, omniscient King,
May we all die in battle, sword in hand,
In armour clad. May ne'er decrepit age,
Or pallid sickness on the bed of peace
Lay us along to die, but in the bloom
Of youth or vig'rous manhood may we end
Our noble lives, and pierc'd with thousand wounds
Fall smiling in the gory rage of fight.
We burn for endless battles with a race,
Unknowing and unknown of thee, who shew
Old men amid their ranks, and tame expire
In shameful beds of sickness, doom'd by thee
Our victims, as the nursery of men,
Destin'd to swell thy legions, and to grace
Heav'n's mighty hosts and radiant palaces.
Oh! on our battles then, with fav'ring eye
Still look: be thou our friend: may never sign
Of the faint-drooping raven awful bode
Thy dread displeasure, and thy aid withheld.
But lead our hosts to victory: nerve their arms
With pow'r unconquerable, and their hearts
With mightiest valour and high scorn of fear.
So shall we own unending wars, and win
Kingdoms on earth, and by heroic death,
Glories of heav'n; and everlasting ire
Vent on the dastard foes of us and thee."

They ceas'd. Immediate from the total host
Shouts furious rose, and o'er the blazing air
Innumerable swords, swift-wav'd, far flash'd
As one vast sheet of fire, or as the sea
Rob'd in the beams of morn, while all aloud
Call "Odin, Odin," to receive their souls
In bloody fight, and on their sounding shields
Clash tumult, unappeas'd. Their falchions broad,
Cypher'd with Runic shapes mysterious, all
Kiss fervent, and with awe implore their aid
In battle, and to pierce the storm of war
Where high amid his blood-red chariot Death
Awaits the sons of heav'n.

Which frenzy hush'd,
Approach the train of Prophetesses, deck'd
In snow-white robes, daughters of Kings. Their pomp
Follow'd a beauteous female band, alike
Devote to Frea, heav'n's imperial Queen,
Odin's magnific bride, Goddess of earth.
To these with rev'rent awe capacious place
Is op'd around, as passing they conduct
Tow'rd the broad altar, princely sacrifice;
Beasts, birds, and fruits, flow'rs, gems, and silken robes.
These offer'd due, the noble females take
Conspicuous station, and receiving strike
Symphonious harps, while their entrancing voice,
Audible far, thus swells the sacred song.

"Goddess of this fair earth, heav'n's sov'reign Queen,
Illustrious Frea, Odin's beauteous spouse,

Mother all-fruitful, Queen of love, receive
Our pious gifts, our grateful meed of praise.
Thou with imperial pomp in highest heav'n
Enthron'd sublime, receiv'st with majesty
The Goddess train, and all th' obeisant Gods;
Ev'n heav'n's high King himself, with regal state
Awaiting thee. But 'mid the dazzling glare
Propitious, kind, thy ever-watchful thoughts
Turn on the race of men, and this their earth,
Dependent on thy care; to thee of old
Giv'n and confirm'd thine own. Thou oft descend'st
On thy refulgent car of glossy green,
Drawn by impetuous steeds; before thy steps
Precursive, Gna, thy stately messenger
Borne on her winged horse, whose shadowy flight
Sails thro' the various worlds. Thy rolling wheels
Hung stationary, from aloft thou view'st,
Below, thy fair dominion, wide-outstretch'd
And various: continents, and isles, and seas,
And spacious rivers, intersecting oft
Climes of still varying temp'rature: not like
In aspect, but assign'd the fit abode
Each for brave men, and heroes, whom thou lov'st;
Habitant there, till death in bloody wars
Summon them hence, and of the slain to thee
Yield thy proud moiety. Hence therefore thou
Delight'st in battles, knowing the rich prize
Thy destin'd portion: and thy rising hills,
And spacious champaigns spreadest wide, for camps
Apt, where the front of war in long array

Marshall'd, may stand oppos'd; and uncontroll'd,
Battles may rage, and blood profus'd in streams
Purple the spacious verdure, and enrich
Thy sloping pastures far. Thou cloth'st the earth
With piny forests, mighty oaks, and trees
Of pond'rous bulk, adapt for weapons huge,
Javelins, and bows, and massy clubs; or whence
Vast ships are form'd with beams and tow'ring masts;
And bid'st the gummy barks of branching woods
Distil the unctious pitch, to sheath the sides
Of stately vessels, fitted hence to ride
Firm and compact the stormy seas, and bear
Warriors to distant regions, meet for spoil.
Within her ample womb thy brooding care
Conceives indurate metals, ores and mines,
Iron or brazen mould, ordain'd to form
Armour, the bossy shield, the massy spear,
Helms, and the robing mail. O'er all thy plains
Multiplied, thou diffusest fiery steeds,
As thunder strong, who 'mid the battle's storm
Rush fearless, raging, while their nostrils smoke
Fury, and lightnings from their eye-balls glare.
These treasures to the valiant race of men
Benignly giv'n, thou justly hence expect'st
Continuous war: and when the martial pomp
Of closing legions joins in shouting storm,
Fierce thro' the darkest fight where thousands bleed,
Gna darts, thy stern ambassadress, and claims
Thy birth-right, half the slaughter'd brave. Tho' plains
Lie strown with shiver'd arms and mangled steeds

V. 1153—1182

Wide-ruinous, thy lib'ral bounty yields
Stores unexhausted for fresh fields of death.
And when the thunder of the fight at last
Receding, lends short interval to joy,
Thou for thy favor'd race of men prepar'st
Sports fit, the pleasures of the bounding chace.
Soon as the early dawn with radiant gold
Tinges thy misty hills, from shadowy caves
Amid wide-stretching vales, thou artful driv'st
Attractive prey, the prowling wolf, the boar,
Or rapid elk: or near smooth-falling streams
And tufted groves, direct'st the dappled deer,
Fleet hare, or wily fox: or soaring high
To the swift arrow point'st thy winged brood,
The tow'ring eagle, orras, or the hawk.
Thou too indulgent spread'st the earth with flocks
And herds, spoil ample after victory,
Whence the full board teems with superb repasts.
Corn o'er thy sunny plains, and shelter'd vales
Waves billowy gold, mother of sparkling mead,
Odorous-streaming, yellow, rich impregn'd
With the bee's luscious sweets. Delicious fruits
Hang clustering o'er the bended trees, and shed
Purpureal fragrance thro' the shadowy leaves:
And for depasturing flocks soft-juicy grass
Luxuriant springs, and clothes the earth's smooth breast
In cheerful green. These noble gifts thy love
Contrives for valiant men, and shews to them
Thy glory. Queen of beauty, oft thou deck'st
Thy wide-extended realm in fair array

Of grace inimitable. Gems and gold
Lurk in thy bosom, and meek-blushing flow'rs
Of ev'ry variegated hue gay-paint
Th' enamel'd meads, the sloping lawns: tall shrubs
Uplift their tender forms in arb'rous tufts
Or rising groves, where'er the sun-shine hangs
Enamour'd, by the grots of coy recess
That spread their checquer'd shade near rippling streams.
The softly-rolling murmur down the vale
Steals calm, till hush'd within some placid lake;
There rests the trav'ler tir'd, at ease repos'd,
Sweetly delighted, and admires the scene:
While 'mid tranquillity no sounds disturb
Solitude, save what Silence loves to hear,
The wild-bees' hum beside the dripping cave,
Or on the lake's smooth face the sudden rush
Of playful fish, that to the circling top
Spring wanton, tempted by the gilded flies
Shadowy-reflected in the glassy deep.
To the sooth'd senses balmy breezes waft
Fragrance, borne mild from blooming banks, diffus'd
Around, and from sequester'd bow'rs the birds
Attune sweet-warbling melodies, the bards
Of nature, whether Eve descending spreads
Gold o'er the western clouds, and meek retires
Amid the low of cattle, scattering soft
Her dews with parting hand to cheer the world:
Or Morn ascending in the saffron east
Unveils her gorgeous car, and sheds anew
Light, life, and beauty. This so fair display

Of matchless grace thro' all the conscious world
Breathes but for thee, imperial Queen of love,
Accordant sentiments of joy, and youth
And universal love. All Nature feels
Thy vital influence, and a tender glow
Warm-thrills thro' all her veins, waking desire.
Beasts seek their willing mates: the feather'd race
Connubial nestle in the secret bush.
Man turns to lovely woman, heav'nly-fair,
Lavish-endued with all thy milder gifts,
Matchless in beauty, unexcell'd in love,
Fruitful in offspring to thy fondest wish.
What wonder if the hero doting prize
Creature so bless'd, and as divine adore,
When in his arms he holds and knows his own
Consummate grace, by equal love endear'd,
Soon too presenting to his ravish'd sight
A blooming race of creatures, like himself.
For whence thro' all attender'd nature runs
So rich a chain of love, but to ensure
Fruitfulness answerable, and increase?
Pleasing to thee; by thee to this great end,
All-fruitful mother, gently thus allur'd.
All nature teems with life, from lordly man
Down to the insect train, from tow'ring oaks
Down to the tender grass, and from thy hand
Exuberant, source of all things, grateful owns
Kind parturition, and disburthening throes.
Delighted woman in her eager arms
Receives her smiling infant, and from thee

Extatic learns the mother's tender joys
And soothing cares: and trains her rising youth
To grateful love of thee, and heav'n's high King,
Thy regal Consort: ready to devote
Life for your honour and to guard the Gods.
To thee we render glory. Genial still
And good remain. Continuous blessings shed
Around of plenty, love, and smiling youth.
To our fair females yield a numerous race
Beauteous, and strong, and brave, meet for the fight;
And oft incite thy Spouse to grant us wars.
So never shall thy honour'd altars want
Due offerings, nor thy name perpetual praise."

Ended the song, the sacred females bow
Humble. The universal host in sign
Of rev'rence on the earth desiring looks
Bend fond, and gently touch with ported spears.
Clamour of joy arose: and proud delight
Beam'd in a conscious smile on ev'ry face.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK IV.

Hymns to the Pagan Deities continued. The Danes by these superstitious rites are rendered furious for battle. Kelwulf's arrival. His army is associated with that of the Danes. The latter insult and disdain the Mercian troops as being Christians, and unworthy to be ranked with Heroes. Feasting in the Danish camp. The manners of the Danes described. Guthrun entertains the principal officers in his tent at a banquet, to which Kelwulf is invited. Bards sing the praises and characters of several Danish chiefs. Night. After the feast, Kelwulf privately opens himself to a confidential Mercian officer, and is exhibited as stung by poignant remorse for his desertion of Alfred, and as harbouring secret hate against the Danes. During the night, Satan, recollecting his threats and meditating revenge, assembles his powers in the air; and divulges to them a project he has formed of departing to Hell, his own world, to fetch from thence more fierce and subtle Spirits, as he finds his present forces unequal to cope with the Angels. The Demons applaud the design. Satan departs in secret on this embassy.

ALFRED.

BOOK IV.

V. 1—18.

NOW tow'rd the altar solemn move the priests
Devote to mightiest Thor, and sacrifice
Appointed lead along, two oxen large,
With emblems proud adorn'd. Silence again
Paus'd universal, as the victims fall
Beneath the mortal stroke. The wonted rites
Perform'd, th' attending bards their raptures high
Awake to kingly Thor, and swell the song—

" All-father's eldest-born, mightiest of sons,
God of the thunder, Thor, great King who rul'st
In empire old the azure-vaulted skies
And all the boundless air, receive thy praise.
Aloft amid the pure empyreal arch
Thy winding palace lifts its gorgeous pomp,
Where countless halls and glitt'ring domes outspread
Rival magnificence and glorious shine
Afar, and golden columns high upraise
Ceilings of silv'ry splendor, blazing rich,

In endless range; Thrudwanger nam'd, the house
Immense and radiant, chief of mansions, dwelt
By Gods or men. Exalted here thou fill'st
Thy spacious throne, with majesty and pow'r
Cloth'd inexpressible, and call'st around
From ev'ry quarter, hast'ning to thy beck,
Thunders, and meteors wing'd with angry fires,
Winds, and red-flashing light'nings, rains, and storms,
Pointing to each his place. They sullen move
In due array behind thy high-arch'd car,
Illustrious flaming o'er astonish'd heav'n,
And wait thy stern commands. Beneath thy feet
The many-colour'd clouds their airy shapes
Mingle, and rolling high their fleecy veils
O'erspread thy glitt'ring structures, with meek grace
Softening th' empyreal blaze. The golden Sun
From the deep-purpled east o'er highest heav'n
Urging his gorgeous car, by Skinfax drawn
The flamy steed of day whose radiant mane
Illumes the earth when dawn's first splendors break,
Passing surveys thy regal state, and oft
Aw'd and enamour'd o'er thy brilliant tow'rs
Hangs, wond'ring. Thou, superb-advanc'd, behold'st
The earth outstretch'd immense, and from thy hands
Dispensest genial seasons. Kindly rains
Refresh th' expectant fields. Delicious airs
Wave mild their odoriferous wings, and shed
Plenty on nature's open breast. Soft dews
Breathe their rich-fostering drops o'er opening flow'rs
And wake the sleeping verdure, Second spring

Gay-paints the summer's arid robe, and decks
Anew brown-changing autumn. All the earth
Smiles glad, and from her bosom sends aloft
To thee, the God of seasons, incense proud
Fragrant-exhaling. Thus when calmer skies
Bespeak thee pleas'd; and kind thou deign'st to hear
Thy vot'ries' pray'rs. Not so when, oft-provok'd,
Thy temper mutable, its brooding rage
Vents terrible, and heav'n's vast vault scarce holds
They desolating wrath. For when the foes
Of Gods in secret from their nether worlds
Ascending, hope insidious to surprize
The forts celestial, or by main attack
To scale her guarded tow'rs: or when bad men
By low and coward deeds incense thine arm,
Then on the world thy loosen'd terrors roll.
Who can withstand, who can describe thy rage?
Girt in thy belt of pow'r, which to thee adds
Redoubled strength, and in thy grasp upheld
Thy thund'rous mace, which launch'd as oft returns
Spontaneous, and thy iron gauntlets wrapt
O'er thy broad hands, scorch'd else by blasting fires,
Thou from thy burning portals issuest swift
A gloomy being, terrible and vast,
Summoning with voice tumultuous to thy side
Darkness, and brooded tempests, and the night
In sable horrors. They involv'd surround
Thy wide-o'ershadowing throne, whose deep recess
Blazes with forked light'nings, and beneath
Rides on pale-streaming meteors. At the sight

The moon all-terrified, and stars aghast
Withdraw their beams, and in their skyey caves
Escape thy perilous approach. Ere long
From the low chambers of the south, thy train
Advances dark, and rolling over heav'n
Th' enormous wheels of thy cloud-rending car
Horribly crash tremendous peals, as borne
With fury irresistible they come
O'er vaulted skies, that underneath their weight
Shake as to fall. Thou, unappall'd, erect'st
Thine arm to heav'n, and on the prostrate world
Launchest horrific thunders. By thy side
Destruction sits, and to thy rage supplies
Arms inexhausted, forked fires, and clouds
Pregnant with sulph'rous globes, and flying storm
Of sleets and hails, and meteor-rolling winds,
Roaring with rainy deluge. Rocks down-dash'd
Proclaim thy dreadful course, whose skyey tops
And mountainous-hanging brows with all their woods
Deciduous rush; unless thy whirlwinds stay
Their passage in mid air, and there disperse
Their shatter'd ruins. Promontories fall
Shiver'd, and ocean from his lowmost bed
Rages in tumult. Cataracts whelming roar
Down all the hills, and drown the deep-sunk vales:
Howl the bleak heaths afar: and nature all,
Shudd'ring with terror, lies in panic awe;
While, borne beyond this earth, the wild uproar
Flies thro' the deep abyss of air, and loud
Resounding echoes at the fiery gates

V. 79—108.

Of Surtur's blazing world, that stunn'd with noise
Start at the sign the mighty habitants.
Transcendent King, be not this pow'r on us
Exerted ever; rather on our foes,
Bend thy hot vengeance. Still be thou, as wont,
Our guardian friend. We name thy palace high,
Refuge from terror; prove it such to us.
We vow the plenteous sacrifice of beasts,
Or if to thee more grateful, ev'n of men,
Select from captive enemies, or choice
Of our own heroes, ev'n of mightiest Kings,
Demanded by thy vengeance, unappeas'd.
But thou art friendly now: and kind receiv'st
Less noble victims. So propitious long
Remain, and gen'rous blessings o'er us show'r."

Hush'd by degrees, in trembling cadence sunk
The mingling harps, harmonious; and awhile
Echoing applauses, loudly rung, deny'd
Silence her place. Till now in turn approach
The sacerdotal band, to great Niord
Consecrate, God who sways the boundless main.
Their victims due they lead; of animals
Two rapid deer, and three tall hounds, a prize
Meet for the pow'r who in the active chace
Delights, and join'd with these, rich-sparkling silks
And costly-broider'd vests, emblem of wealth,
Pleasing to him, whose proud dominion yields
Treasures inestimate to whom he loves.
These offer'd meek, as wont, and of the flesh

Won by the chace part kept for solemn feasts,
Soon the due train of Bards in form'd array
Advance, and striking full the sonant strings
Thus the stern God in rapt'rous strains extol,

" God of the boundless ocean, mighty King,
Niord, high name, who rul'st the swelling sea,
Rivers, and waters all, and winds, attend
Thy honour'd rites. Great is thine awful pow'r.
Fix'd by the wild sea's shore, on sky-crown'd rocks
Whence in wide prospect lies the azure deep,
Thy airy palace hangs, fabric immense
Of lucid brilliance, where the verdant shine
Of emerald pillars, mingling-rich, lifts high
Its starry dome. Along the sapphire tow'rs
Set o'er its chrystal firmament, far-beam
Innumerable gems, profuse-inlaid,
Of hues that deck the show'ry bow of heav'n,
While branching corals o'er the amber walls
Fantastic spread their arb'rous shapes, and seem
Purpureal nascent rubies. Deep within,
Huge native caves thy dripping chambers form,
That echo each to each the roaring winds,
Music delightful, with full swell or fall
In long succession to thy kingly ear.
Forth from thy shadowy cells thou com'st, array'd
In orient pearls, and twining shells, o'erspread
On thy cerulean robe, and stretching high
Thy regal sceptre, the loud whirlwinds fly
Amaz'd: and not a breath disturbs the smooth

And placid bosom of the deep. Thou then
Pleas'd view'st thy fair dominion, and allur'd
By the calm splendor of thy liquid plain,
Feel'st thy heart beat with dalliance, and to mind
Recall'st thy fav'rite sports, the rapid chace.
Sports lov'd by heroes too, their fond employ
After the battle. Then from out thy dens
Thou bring'st thy weapons, thy tremendous bow,
Form'd of the hugest pine that brow'd the hills,
Thy quivers stor'd with masts of vessels wreck'd,
And pond'rous javelins, mighty oaks, dire-barb'd
With prows of shatter'd ships. Then launching vast
Into the fathomless abyss, thou stalk'st
Low mid the mass of waters, and serene
Survey'st thy lair afar. The starting whales,
Who know thy dreadful hand, thou glad pursu'st
Terrible, swift as air, and from thy arm
Dashing thy horrid darts, transfixest sheer
Th' enormous monsters. Floods of sanguine gore
Purple the sea. Or underneath the isles
Amid their pillar'd grots of deep recess
Thou seekest gems and sea-bred wealth, to deck
Thy princely mansion, and the glitt'ring vest
Of Skada thy fair spouse who rather loves
Her native mountains than thy stormy shores,
Scarce lur'd by all thy splendor to abide
Within thy sounding halls. She of thy love
Secure, compell'd thy frequent interchange
Of habitation, three successive nights
Within thy dome marine and sea-beat rocks;

Nine 'mid the mountains of her mighty Sire
The great Thiassa. Here thro' howling dens
Roar thy deep winds, and from their caverns fright
The savage beasts, while o'er the steepest hills
And hollow vales thou fly'st, or mid the night
Stalk'st o'er the forest-tops aloft, and view'st
By the moon's rays the huge wood-monster laid
Sleeping, thy destin'd prey, ere earliest dawn
Shall tinge the trees with light. O'er the wide lakes
Or the broad torrent-stream thou rid'st at ease
Within thy gliding car, the bright-scal'd fish
Seizing, that cloth'd in azure-changing gold
Bask in the sun-transparent waves, or fly
As arrows swift in vain. But these delights
Not so attract thee, as thy heaving realm,
Whither at stated hour thy steps return
Joyful. Soon ent'ring 'mid thy palace bright,
Should the wild ocean to its absent King
Forget allegiance, or thy charge assign'd
Mad disobey, irascible thou soon
Assum'st the terrors of Almighty pow'r
Incens'd. Infuriate thou collect'st thine arms,
Hurricanes pent in caves, and gloomy fires,
Meteors, of thunder born, and hail, and rains
And stormy gust, and in thy cloudy car,
Of whirlwinds form'd, inwove with darkness, sail'st
Tremendous o'er the rocks, and on the main
Dart'st all thy pow'r at once. Th' astonish'd sea
Ascends in mountain surges to the sky,
Roll'd upward from unfathomable depths.

V. 197—226.

With horrible commotion. Islands huge
And drifted rocks, convolving to and fro,
Totter o'erwhelm'd. Fleets, shatter'd, heav'nward dart V. 227—256.
On arching waves: down with tremendous crash
Sunk instantaneous to the low'st abyss,
There fix'd, until the next succeeding surge
Upheave around their shiver'd ruins, masts,
And beams, and sails, and floating carcases
Of men, their crews. Resistless all the sea,
Rages afar ungovernable. Earth,
Air, heav'n, convuls'd, th' unspeakable uproar
Commingling swell. Nor ends their wrath, until
Thou satiate, bid'st, and from the horrid waste
Retiring, thou ascend'st thy rocking dome.
Sudden heav'n, ocean, earth, all-calm, repose.
So, if thou wilt, assembled navies ride
Safe o'er the gently-swelling main, and hail
Joyful their destin'd port. Oh! Sov'reign King,
Capricious, frail of temper, on our fleets
With heroes fill'd, who own thy mighty pow'r
And thro' the trackless deep thy guiding hand
Ask humble, oh! propitious look, and bend
Hither their destin'd course in full array,
Soon to forsake Dorsetian shores. Oh! send
Prosperous breezes: o'er thy silver waves
Waft them along in peace. For thou can'st smooth
The glassy sea, till its serene expanse
Reflects all colours and mild rays of day,
Glitt'ring as gems: or mid the silent night
Can'st bid the moon and radiant host of stars

Behold another rival sky below,
And all heav'n's pomp inverted. When our ships
Stretch their white wings and o'er the azure breast
Fly of thy softly-rippling waves, may then
Our mariners exulting own thee good,
And pointing from the deck thy verdant isles
Or murm'ring main, exclaim, "how lovely-fair!"
Thus spare our fleets: and this fair realm subdued,
Oft may we sail from land to land, and win
Spoil, treasures, kingdoms, thy proud gifts, reserv'd
For Heroes sole who know and honour thee."

Last moves the total train of Bards conjunct,
And Dames prophetic by the Sov'reign Chiefs
Accompanied and Leaders from the troops
Select, advancing all in crowded pomp
Tow'rd a proud altar, with united praise
Bent last to yield the tribute of their love
To Bragé, God of high poetic lays,
Music, and eloquence. Bards chief-inspir'd,
And of the Gods prime-favor'd, now advance
Solemn, and striking rapt the deep-ton'd strings,
Roll the rich tide of harmony and song.

"God of poetic lays, by heav'n to man
Benign dispens'd, whom music's sounds, and verse,
And winning eloquence, obey as Prince,
Receive thy meed of praise. 'Mid list'ning Gods
Irradiant seated on thy lofty throne,
Thou oft, to swell ætherial bliss, and joys

Ineffable diffuse, thy splendid lyre
Warbling attunest. Silvery-trembling notes
Float thro' the stiller heav'n, till thy sweet voice,
Harmonious-blending, lulls each ear divine
To fond oblivion and mute languishment.
Valhalla's dome, soft-echoing, breathes around
Slow-spreading airs, that take the sense surpriz'd
In list'ning extacy. Converse tho' loud
Drops, sudden. Heroes, pause, and bending calm,
Lift the pleas'd ear, all to intense delight
Subdued, and to thy pow'r surrender'd meek:
Whether thy tender-streaming, soothing falls
Whisper celestial love; or louder strains,
Borne in rich pomp along the sounding heav'n,
O'erwhelm that melting transport, and the soul
Rouse to high ardor. Then thy sprightly notes
Wake frolic joy, cheering the sumptuous feast.
Heroes implore thee to inroll their names
Proud in thy rapt'rous songs, among the Gods
Sung frequent, honour sole by emulous deeds
Atchiev'd of heav'nly war. Thy winning words
Hold wond'ring Deities in pleas'd suspense
Hung on thy lips, whose witching eloquence,
Serene in wisdom, with delicious sway
Composes ev'ry variance, and allays
The rising passions to accordant peace.
Thou own'st th' Almighty Odin's precious gift,
Source of poetic lays, that drink divine
Blood of the great Kuaser, Wisdom's Prince,
(Slain by fell malice of heav'n's envious foes,)

But by the King of heav'n with peril large
Sought and obtain'd: then by his gracious hand
Mingled with honey and celestial juice
Drawn from that Tree, whose rich-fed boughs o'erhang
Mimer's prophetic stream: and last to thee
Consign'd, thy sacred ministerial charge.
Thou of this dear-form'd drink to sons of men,
Thy favor'd few select, giv'st at their birth,
Themselves unasking. Whom thy love has chos'n,
He with a solemn inspiration fir'd
Grows from his earliest youth: a tender glow
Extatic thrills along his conscious veins,
Alive to ev'ry impulse: soothing sad
His brooded thought. Imagination roams
Thro' boundless space, and wings her easy flight
From world to world, while airy pictures stand
Visible to his raptur'd sight, that bid
His heav'n-touch'd mouth with answering eloquence
Sound themes of mightiest import, and awake
Glory faint-drooping in the doubtful breast,
And swell heroic rage, and patriot zeal:
Or terrible alarm the shudd'ring soul;
Or melt the frame with gentle strains of love
And tender-weeping pity: or with joy
Ravish the gayly-beating heart. The soul
Aw'd and subdued, he with a native pow'r
Bends to his purpose, and with care implants
Deep in the op'ning heart the pregnant seeds
Of virtue, rich-imbued with mellow'd sweets.
While truth, array'd in numerous measures, falls

V. 315—344.

V. 345—374.

Adhesive, as the fresh'ning dews of heav'n.
Song with immortal glory can surround
The star-like name of whom it loves; the meed
Envied of heroes, and by merit won.
Hence thy lov'd spouse, the fair Iduna, bears
That never-dying fruit, whose taste confers
Perpetual youth. Thou from heav'n's King himself,
Father of magic verse, obtainest oft
And giv'st to sons of men, favor'd of thee,
The Runic Rhymes miraculous, whose pow'r
Can from the dark grave call the mould'ring dead
Astonish'd back to light, and bid them stand
Rob'd as with ghastly life, in pristine shape,
To ope the brooding mysteries of fate
And deep futurity: or strains that breath'd
Can in mid tempest hush the roaring winds,
Still'd to meek Silence: or along the air
Uplift the charm'd possessor, floating safe
Thro' darkness, and his uncouth way obscure
Winnowing amid the pathless infinite.
Some grav'd on leaves, can heal the poignant pangs
Of wounds, or pale disease; some fervent-pour'd
Can charm the hostile sword, ev'n when uprais'd
To strike some bloody deed, and bid it fall
All-pow'rless from the spell-struck wearer's hand.
Some sooth malignant hate, to other charm
Implacable: or in alluring chain
Win and preserve the soft-eyed virgin's love.
Some tell the nature high of ev'ry God
And Essence spiritual, that animate

Nature thro' all her works: or render sweet
Solitude, till the rich possessor grows
In dreariest station reconcil'd and blest.
These fancy-prompted lays alliance near
Claim fond with music's flowing harmony,
Thy second precious gift. Thou kindly first
Bad'st wond'ring man from art-disposed strings
Or hollow tubes elicit magic sound,
That breaks with rapture the delighted air,
And various utters to the human heart
An universal language, whose free tones
Wake ev'ry passion in th' according breast.
Thee owns the lyre its Parent, and soft lute,
The mellow harp; the trumpet loud, the shrill
Clarion, the breathing flute, the bellowing drum,
And clashing cymbal. Oft in union full
Commingling, these the solemn pomp of sound
Roll rich along, majestic, and inspire
Ardor and high exploits, and fire the rage
Of tempest-roaring war. Then sadly sweet
Plains single the meek lyre, or sighing flute,
And tenderly evokes the silent tear
To grace some dirge for heroes freshly fall'n,
When in the cold tomb laid: or whispering soothes,
With cautious touch, extatic-trembling round,
Sorrow in saddest mood, and mild averts
Sullen despair. Then sportive melody
Rouses the jolly dance and moving grace,
Or glads the rosy-smiling festal hour,
And happy nuptial rite, and natal day;

Or lulls to tranquil ease disturbed pain.
Such music's pow'r, these thy so varied strains
Exalting, melting, ravishing the soul.
Then thy last gracious meed, not honour'd least
By noble men, to thy two other gifts
Congenial, close-assimilant, thy love
Imparts to chosen favorites: the prize
Of flowing eloquence, by mightiest chiefs
Sought eager, and from thee suppliant implor'd.
For from the graceful lips of whom thy hand
Pregning has touch'd, persuasion smoothly rolls
Alluring language, whose rich-moving stream
Clear, copious, full, o'erpow'rs th' entranced throng
To meek obedience and attentive awe;
Drinking those honey'd words, that draw the soul
Tow'rd the mov'd Orator: prompt still to feel
Varying emotion, as his gradual swell
Vehement thunders wrath, and wakes the storm
Of frenzy-burning battle; or compos'd,
Solemn his gently-soothing falls appease
Infuriate multitudes to calm repose.
Celestial Arts! thy treasur'd, high rewards
Beneficent indulg'd to human kind!
Oh! liberal show'r thy envied boons. Diffuse
To thy prophetic bards, adoring thee,
Rapturous song, and music's moving strains:
To mighty chiefs spontaneous eloquence,
Rousing each passion thro' their list'ning trains.
So shall thy altars splendid blaze, and thou
Be crown'd with loftiest honours, while we own

One pow'r of music, eloquence, and song."

Now ceas'd the strains mellifluous, and applause V. 435—463.
Triumphant rose around: whose echoing swell
Cheer'd the glad bards, and proud-attending chiefs.
Silence expectant floated thro' the air,
As Odin's holy priests now grave advance
To the high altar's verge, and there full seen
Raise loud the solemn voice, and precepts high
Inculcate, giv'n to men by heav'n's great King:
Promising heav'nly love to those alone
Who die in battle; who adore the Gods:
Who faithful cherish friends, and wives, and chiefs,
Revenging all their injuries and deaths;
Who kind and hospitable spread the feast
For welcome trains: who dread far worse than death
The name of Coward. These their moral guides
The multitudes receive with rev'rent awe,
And burn for future battle and to meet
Again the recreant English. Combat fills
Their eager thoughts. With sudden frenzy fir'd,
Many vociferously demand the rites
Of custom'd tournament with captive foes
Ta'en in preceding fight, to augur thence
Success of future war; " fit instruments
" Now sole to yield delight and pleasure high
" In pompous spectacle: since on themselves,
" (To death preferring mean captivity
" Nor plunging in their breast the previous sword),
" They have induc'd foul ignominy, worse

" Than thousand deaths, or terriblest revenge:
" The scorn of ev'ry finger, sole reserv'd
" For games, or victims of the sacrifice."

The Sov'reign Guthrun, thus demanded, mild
Answers.—" Th' approach of eve invites the feast,
And praise of bards, becoming noble men,
Victorious now in battle. Future day,
Not distant, shall behold proud tournaments
Fought with our captive foes, omen of fate.—
Now tow'rd the ready camp our steps return."

He said, and acquiescent soon, the host
Prepares to seek the tents. As thus the crowds
Turn now, that occupy th' extremer verge,
Behold! full-gleaming on their ravish'd sight,
Wide o'er the nearest hill, standards, and hosts
Moving in radiant armour, plain advance.
Swells instantaneous the loud shout of joy.
The news quick-spreads from mouth to mouth. All fix
Their eager eyes. "'Tis Kelwulf, Kelwulf," all
Exulting echo. Pouring o'er the hill,
Lo! steeds and banners, shields and flashing spears,
Innumerous in succession, rush to view.
Bright in the setting sun, the splendid trains
Shone as they moved along, like rolling fires
Ravaging broad some woody vale, and borne
Onward in spreading volumes by the wind.
Swift they advanc'd, but silent. Sounds of bards
Or echoing strains none rose. Resounds the earth

Under their thronging feet, as swells the roar
Of thunder rolling distant. Larger now
They spread upon the sight, and cross the vale
Contiguous, and ascend the champaign wide
In deep procession of immeasur'd length.

Supreme in eminence in front appear'd
Kelwulf their haughty leader, as he came
Majestic borne upon his coal-black steed,
Noble in aspect: but downcast he seem'd,
And his fix'd look, beneath his bending casque,
Sullenly eyed the ground. Nor splendor less
Adorn'd his stature than might well become
Mightiest monarch. Shield inlaid with gold,
And pliant mail, with golden tissue wrought,
Hung mantling o'er him: his huge breast-plate flam'd
Auriferous, and around his plumed helm
Glitter'd a kingly diadem. Nor there
Shone not the regal tufas, near upborne
Royalty's waving ensigns: while aloft
Floated along the air in spreading folds
Imperial standards, pompous, rolling broad
Their ostentatious pageantry: a train
Of mighty chieftains near their titled King
Follow'd, less decorate in arms, but proud
Bounding on warlike, richly-mantled steeds.
Thus as their van approach'd, the Danish King
Commands his circling troops to ope meet space,
Thro' which may pass the coming host and reach
The lofty altars, where selected chiefs

Exalted stand. They at his word dispart
Instant their throniging files, and soon present
Double array, whose farther, curved ranks
Elliptic met, and full to view display'd
Within th' inclosing range, the pillar'd mound,
High-crown'd with martial state. The sov'reign King
Waves in mid air his outstretch'd spear, to guide
Th' advancing army's course. They conscious bend
Thither their hast'ning bands, and enter soon
Th' expectant hosts, rang'd oppposite.
As thus
Pass'd on the summon'd pow'rs, from either side
Insulting hisses rose, and hostile scorn,
Rude laughs, and taunts illib'ral, which they bore,
Not daring to resent. Too well their chief
Knew that revenge upon the lowest slave
Among the Danish ranks, would soon induce
On his whole people signal fate, o'erwhelm'd
In universal massacre. He knew,
And prudent had forewarn'd his legion trains
Patient to bear all insult, as the sole
Hope of escape or pledge of safe return.
Grief mark'd each English count'nance, and despair
Gleam'd in their piteous eyes, now to observe
Themselves thus sad-enslav'd, to cruel scorn
Passive expos'd, and 'gainst their country thus
Compell'd in arms: but all remember'd well
Their titled Sov'reign's monitory words,
When grieving he convok'd his numerous pow'rs,
Call'd by the Danish mandate, and had left,

Penitent, mournful, his disturbed throne
To join the war. Nor did they now withhold
Obedience: conscious that their utmost aid
Should they refuse, soon had their country own'd
Horrors insufferable: Mercia's wide
And fertile province soon resistless whelm'd
In ruinous waste; and them, their wives, and babes
Ras'd by the sword. Thus pass'd they gloomy on,
Till their broad van arriv'd the pillar'd height
Where stood the kingly generals. Stops the host
In long array, by due command, afar
Repeated.

Oskital impatient, now
First breaks the solemn silence, and accosts
Imperious thus their Vassal-Prince. "What spoil
Bring ye from those rich provinces, so late
Cross'd in your journey, and what numbers swell
Your summon'd legions?"

Kelwulf bending low
Mild answers. "Noble Sov'reigns, as we bent
Hither our rapid course, we found the land
Evacuate by the natives, terrified
With fame of our approach, and from our steps
Fled previous, with them borne whate'er could yield
Sustenance, or admit removal. Gone
Thus from their homes, of shelter destitute,
We know not whither they have fled or sought
Refuge, unless with Alfred's armed host.
Therefore we bring no spoil, the plunder'd waste
Of countries left: but from our province lead

What force and numbers could be well conven'd
From countries wide, yet rare of habitants,
Thinn'd by continuous slaughter, and the waste
Of ceaseless ravages o'er all the plains;
Which dreadful scourges, blended, have destroy'd
Multitudes, else convok'd to aid your war."

With this response unsatisfied, the fierce
Oskital quick rejoins: "I mark your mind: you come
Destitute then of spoil, which we ourselves
Had fail'd not to amass in progress, long
As your's. Ye wish not to oppress, or hurt
Your countrymen, but studious seek to screen
From injury, and suffer to escape
With all that they possess, rather than bring
Riches to us, your masters. But attend
My words, the words of every Dane in me.—
If henceforth ye exert not all your force,
Conjunct with us, to spoil and sack this realm
Victorious still in battle: on that day
When faint ye shrink, or coward turn from fight
That day, no longer deem'd our friends, and spar'd
To till our lands, and serve our wars and feasts,
We hold you mortal foes, and on you turn
Unconquerable arms, o'erwhelming soon
In spareless carnage all your traitor-pow'rs."

Scarce had he ceas'd, when hideous clamour rose
Unanimous from all the Danish bands,
Dreadful, as when in famish'd Indian wilds

Troops of assembling tygers, mad for blood,
Prepare in one innumerous host to pour
On villages and haunts of men, what time
The natives list, aghast, at dead midnight
The swelling thunder of their distant roars,
And prompt to save their homes, themselves, their babes,
Spread sudden all the land with blazing fires.

Nor unalarm'd the English hear their fate
Menac'd, whom next the Sov'reign Guthrun thus
More mild accosts. "Henceforth your forces rest
Subject to my supreme command, yourselves
Still their immediate leaders. Now with us
Turn your prompt march tow'rd our capacious camp,
There to enjoy feasts and the songs of bards,
Revels and triumph, the deserv'd reward
Of our magnific victory, and to you
Refreshing solace of fatigue and toil,
Earnest of future pleasures, glories high,
To be atchiev'd by battles with our foes,
Till we subdue this kingdom, and enjoy
All as our own, its habitants our slaves."

Strait all the Danish hosts, with Kelwulf's bands
Tow'rd the wide camp direct their sounding march.
O'er them innumerous ensigns splendid wav'd
Their martial blazonry, and loud the blair
Of thousand trumpets the deep tumult swell'd
Of warlike instruments, concordant roll'd
Thro' the full air. Shouts rose of madd'ning hosts

Triumphant, oft invoking Gods to mark
Their mighty pow'rs and terrible array.
Thus as they move, the Danish hosts aloud
Deride their new associate peers, and brand
With ignominious names of, "Christians, slaves
Mean, coward Infidels. War, war alone
Becomes brave heroes. But your Sov'reign burns
To 'stablish peace, and war's celestial joys
Eternally exclude. He sole inspires
Submission calm to laws, and doting priests
School'd in some vain religion, servile, poor,
Fitted for souls like your's. You shew old men
Grey hair'd amid your ranks, decrepit, worn,
Whom soon disease will drag into the grave,
Sinking in helpless weakness. Look thro' us;
We sole display young heroes, fresh, robust,
Gigantic, apt for battle. All the rest
Are prematurely gone to heav'n's high King.
Swords in their hands. But come, enjoy at last
The glorious honour of becoming men.
Burn henceforth, if you dare, to end your lives
Amid the hottest fight. Renounce, forget
Your base religion, and by worthy deeds
Seek to conciliate Odin, and tho' late
Win proud admission to his happy halls.
But tho' ye love not war, be valiant now,
Else—you have heard the King—his threats are true.

V. 637—665.

Insulted thus the English legions pass
Amid th' exulting Danes, who march along

In frantic tumult, singing Odin's name,
The joys of valour, the contempt of death.
Clarions and thousand martial sounds incense
Their emulous rage, while in responsive strains
They utter rapt'rous songs of ancient bards,
Familiar in each mouth, from sire to son
Traditionally taught. Chanting in strains
Alternately, confus'd, with hideous noise
Now they arrive the camp; and entering soon
In long succession, thro' the crowded tents
Disperse, all conscious of their order'd place.
Separate the English bands in station ope
And less commodious find abode. Near these
Are fix'd the hapless train of pris'ners, ta'en
In the last battle, who dishonour'd place
Share now with oxen, and the spoil of beasts.
A fame had pass'd that Guthrun had design'd
To form incarcerating hovels, best
To yield the captives shelter; now they stood
Bound in ignoble chains to massive stones
Or trees. The Mercians with regret survey
Many their captive countrymen, whom once
They knew in other station, ere revolt
Parted their union. These in misery now
They could not, nor had dar'd, relieve. When these
Mark Kelwulf, the proud chief, once favor'd high
In Alfred's faithful host, with mournful looks
And sad expressive gestures they deplore
His fatal conduct, and his pow'rs enslav'd.
Nor seem'd he callous or unmov'd: as thus

V. 666—695.

He caught their mien, involuntary tears
Suffus'd his eyes, which his averted face
Soon hid from sight. To him in pensive mood
Thus occupied, near his chief captains, now
Deputed heralds invitation high
Bring from the Sov'reign Leaders to attend
Appointed feast in Guthrun's kingly tent;
Thus to partake a night to gen'ral joy
Devoted, honour'd as the martial peers
Of noblest Danes, by condescending grace.
The chiefs with sad obeisance bow, and meek
Receive the kingly message, promising
Observance due.
Thro' all the eager camp
Festivals now begun proclaim the shades
Of eve advancing fast. The spacious tents
Are universal throng'd with armed guests,
Rang'd in their several bands. Down by their sides
Repose their pond'rous shields, and round the tents
Rest their tall spears, while seated they surround
The crowded tables, loaded with the flesh
Of oxen, boars, and deer, which they devour
In meals enormous. Matrons, virgins fair,
Willing attend, and to their hands present
Frequent the mighty skull, with flowing beer
Crown'd, and exulting quaff'd with ardent vows
Of fury on the foe, or mention proud
Of noble captains, or remembrance sad
Of fallen friends. Impatient all aspire
For future battle, and already part

England's rich southern province as their own,
The rest subdued:—on Alfred they devote
Vengeance, and fond renew their former vows, V. 726—755.
To equal their high chiefs in valour: them
Not to survive, but enter in their train
The hall of Odin: furious to avenge
Each other's death: to face five foes: to shrink
Never from death, but smiling court its wound.
Bards pass around, and sing in raptur'd strains
The praise of all the brave, denouncing stern
The dreadful doom of cowards. All the camp
Resounds afar with revels, and their loud
Carousal, warlike songs, and savage howls,
That hill and valley echo round.

Nor less
Festivity now reigns amid the tent
Regal of mighty Guthrun, hung around
With armour, shields, and scalps of slain; here, met
In high assemblage, all the sov'reign Kings,
Guthrun, and Oskital, and Amund sat,
Attended by their numerous-thronging chiefs,
Noblest and greatest, and a stately train
Of royal-vested bards, and sacred priests
Consecrate to each higher God; and these
Augmenting, Kelwulf's princely company
Of Mercian chiefs rang'd intermix'd. But he
Amid his ample train sat mute, and seem'd
Pensive, nor cheerful, tho' the table rang
With revelry, while plenteous viands spread
Its wide extent, of ven'son and the flesh

Reserv'd from sacred rites; and hydromel,
And luscious mead, and gen'rous wines, around
Pass'd copiously in polish'd goblets, form'd
Of art-deck'd skulls, curious-inlaid with gold
And graceful serv'd by smiling virgins, chos'n
From all most beauteous; waking joy and love.
Guthrun in highest place amid his bards
Oft rising fills an ample skull, and drinks
To Odin's honour for proud victory,
To Frea for the meed of plenty, Thor
For genial seasons, and to other Gods
Successive. Then the memory fond recalls
Of warriors fall'n in battle, and the cup
Quaffs to their praise. Heroes and Virgins sing
Alternate verses, the politer mark
Esteem'd of gallantry; and fondly learnt
In hours of peace. Wives animate and cheer
Their wounded husbands to renew'd assaults
In future war, and to their valour bear
Proud-envied testimony; giv'n to none
Reproaches, fear'd by heroes worse than death:
And vow to educate their infant sons
In their forefathers' steps. Young warriors boast
Now of their skill in songs of fame, what stars
They know by name to guide their trackless course
Amid the foamy deep: how well they swim,
Or fly across the ice on sounding skates:
Anticipate an early death, and tell
The various pleasures of heav'n's palaces,
Burning for future war: meanwhile they vow

V. 756—785.

To ravage all the land: deride their foes
And Alfred: Oskital extolling high
For leagues of peace infring'd.

V. 786—815.

Arrogant now
Oskital boasts the merit to have broke
Treaties, ignobly wrested, and his hate
Pers'nal of Alfred loud declares: whom much
He scorns that his too credulous faith should deem
Heroic souls could e'er be bound by oaths
Invoking Christian Gods. Henceforth remains
For Alfred to admire what heroes dare:
When rallying once again his shatter'd pow'rs,
He leads them to slaughter, till his mad
Insatiate folly back learn at last, how vain
Against th' omnipotent to threaten war.

To whom in answer Guthrun tells, that soon
The foe shall meet fair war in open field
Where they may fall like heroes, and the Danes
Swell Odin's legions: prays it may evene
The lot or of himself or other King
Alfred to meet in single fight, and try
The prowess of his arm: for he alone
Remains the bulwark of the English host,
Else shrinking still from hard contest: he sole
By equal skill and courage rules and guides
The universal army, whom success,
Him absent, ne'er could favor; nor on land
Nor on the main: on both, the English pow'rs
Shall soon be prov'd. The puissant Danish fleet

Equipp'd in men and numbers no assault
Need fear from Alfred's meaner squadron, poor
In seamen as in force, to lowest state
Reduc'd, ere he its slumb'ring strength reviv'd. V. 816—834.

Now Amund celebrates the rapt'rous joys
Of splendid festivals like these, the meed
Of glorious war: boasts if himself could meet
Alfred in fight, the English monarch's crown
Cleft should decidubus vanish, and his skull
Soon pendent on his own broad belt, the next
Proud feast should see chang'd to a drinking-cup,
Quaff'd by each noble mouth. Such converse holds
Th' exulting chieftains, till the solemn bards
Raise now th' expected rhapsodies of praise
On loud-rung harps, swell'd by their trancing voice,
Recording mighty deeds, which their own eyes
Have witness'd, while their magic diction rolls
Poetic ardor, and the fervid glow
Of sacred inspiration: moving deep
Each yielded heart. Alternate they resound
Guthrun, the great, the kingly hero; good,
And fav'rite high of Gods: Oskital bold,
Valiant, the wealthy Sov'reign; Amund brave,
Noble and free, the warrior's gen'rous friend,
The soul of feasts, the thunder of the field:
Inexorable Hubba, stern, unmov'd
In direst danger: Hinguar, his compeer,
Skill'd in the magic Reafen, worthy son
Of the proud monarch Regner, who in death

Laugh'd joyful; Haldene pensive, but in war
Insatiate: Frena, friend of liberty,
Hater of tyrants: Sidroc, in the field
Terrible, nor in armed ships a foe
Less dread, or skill'd. These noble names, conjunct
With many a chief and potent thane, their songs
Echo: and rouse the patriot flame, and love
Unsatisfied of glory: then the Gods,
Hymn'd solemn, win attentive awe: the chance
Dangers and conduct of the last proud field
Commemorated ravish every ear.

Thus wore the night, while all the joyous camp
Commit each wild excess, deeming to please
The Gods, invok'd by ev'ry warrior now
And pictur'd to each fancy visibly
In various ensigns and abodes. Such faith
Familiar knowledge of their pow'rs divine,
Taught by the bards, inspir'd. All madly vow
To wake like revels, from the plunder'd waste
Of provinces adjacent, till the day
Dawn of wish'd battle with the hostile ranks
Hither approach'd.

At length by slow degrees
The camp grows hush'd; the feasts dissolve, the men
Retiring to their tents, seek each the bed
Of their oft-varied spouse. Chiefs own a train
(Custom allow'd, and mark of honour deem'd)
Of beauteous females, emulous to win
Their constant love, wild-ranging, nor confin'd

To one in tender union, but the glow
Of lawless nature. Wives their infant sons
Nurture to deeds of arms, and fond inure
To scenes of blood, ere yet their unus'd limbs
Can wield the spear, or bear the weighty mail.
Their daughters, bred alike to wounds and death
Attentive learn to staunch the throbbing wounds
Of father, brother, friend, physicians sole,
And honour'd as divine. Now faint arise
The sounds of mirth, and night to sleep resigns
Her o'erdrench'd revellers.

But not to sleep
Kelwulf retir'd: he in his tent awake,
At midnight amid dim and silent gloom
Lab'ring with anguish and the poignant sense
Of deep regret, held with a Mercian chief,
Young, true, and by the rebel-sov'reign lov'd,
Sad conference: and to him his burthen'd soul
Thus open'd.

" Wretched man: what then avails
Kingdom or pow'r to me, tho' I possess
The sway I sought. Unworthy, I forsook
My country, friends affectionate, and high
Respect and favour of my rightful King,
To win a miserable throne. Vain hope!
Forsaken thus of happiness, the love
Of virtuous heroes, and my own esteem.
The slave of cruel enemies: compell'd
Against my country thus to rise in arms:
To slay my countrymen, my former friends,

To persecute religion, and induce
Dire Pagan horrors, war and tyranny,
And spread eternal ruin o'er the land. V. 895—924.
Appalling thoughts! oh! could I yet become
What once I was! could I again return
To duty, and my country's rights defend!—
But no! it cannot be.—How could I face
My injur'd countrymen? or with what eyes
Could they receive me? pointed but with sneers
By all the common troops whom I so late
Commanded!—How should I behold the King,
To me so kind, or Rayner, to my heart
Once dear as life, whom I ungrateful left,
And from their cause seduc'd so many, now
Involv'd in equal misery?—Oh! that shame
I could not bear: the dread, distracting thought
Terrifies me. No! I must still support
My present lost condition, and fight on,
Detested and despis'd by all the good:
The scorn, the slave of tyrant foes: and die
At last ignobly, by no tender tear
Wept, nor repos'd within an honour'd tomb
By the kind hand of love. No bards will give
My name to future times, but with disgust
Turn from my mention, or will warn alone
Others to shun my treachery. Oh! my friend,
Too faithful Bernulph, my o'erloaded heart
Sinks faint within me, stung with conscious pangs
Intolerable—lost—"

He spoke, and lean'd

Silent upon the youthful hero's neck,
While long-drawn sighs, deep-heav'd, bespoke a heart
Sore-charg'd. The gen'rous youth was mov'd, and felt
Compassion's melting influence. "Say not, lost,"
With cheering voice he added, "but resume
Courage, and wait compos'd a change of fate.
What chieftain more his followers' zealous love
Possesses dearer than yourself, who all
Are ready to devote their lives to save
Their Leader? Sov'reign now, acknowledg'd such
By all. They mark not, nor thus deeply feel
Their country's sufferings, happy to obtain
Sustenance glad, and win their Sov'reign's love."

Not thus appeas'd, his heart-felt speech resumes
Th' unhappy Kelwulf. "Oh! that I alike
Had been some common soldier, to the will
Subservient of my chief, nor with high pow'r
Invested, whose fair-tempting semblance won
Me from fidelity! How glad would I
Now yield up all my titled state, and be
As one of them, might I again redeem
Forfeited honour, and by good men lov'd,
Die as an honest man, my country's cause
Bravely defending! But just heav'n decrees
My punishment. I see, and strongly feel
My country's miserable state, denied
Now ever to afford my treacherous aid.
All will abhor me, while with grateful praise
Posterity and all th' admiring land

Shall bless the host of Alfred, scorning still
My rebel pow'rs. Tho' with their present state
Content, they reck not now their future woes,
What reparation can I make to men
Once good and faithful? now by me seduc'd
From duty's virtuous path, thro' love to me
And faith abus'd, who with their future sons
Down to posterity must now become
Wretched thro' me: henceforth of slaught'rous war
The ceaseless victims, in disorder fell
And savage superstition lost: no peace,
No arts, no laws, to sweeten and endear
This transient life, or win immortal joys:
But instruments of dire destruction made
On their own inn'cent country, and the slaves
Of whom they can but hate: whom now my soul
Utter abhors, with indignation full:
Nor without ample cause. My tender wife—
Oh! why recall the dread idea!—She—
My amiable wife—how do I bear
To speak that sacred name?—she knew and oft
Would warn my proud ambition, while I form'd
High, aggrandizing schemes. If I withdrew
From Alfred's host my numerous-banded pow'rs
And own'd the Danish sway, the proferr'd meed
Promis'd by traitorous Oskital, was ev'n
Mercia's imperial sceptre. What could then
Deter me, or restrain, thus blind, and led
By phantoms of insatiate pow'r and mad
Ambition? I receiv'd the dazzling terms:

V. 955—984.

Betroth'd my only daughter, beauteous, young,
And innocent, to be the destin'd bride
Of some high Danish chief. But heav'n abhorr'd
Contracts so infamous, and to itself
Call'd her in sudden death; while I on wars
Roaming abroad, her splendid nuptial lot
Deep-meditated. Scarce on my new throne
Seated, and with the mockery of state
Invested, ere the savage Danes despis'd
My titled royalty. In pure contempt
Of this my fancied sway, the wretches dar'd
At dead of night, t' assail my sleeping dome
With hostile fire, and by th' avenging doom
Of heav'n (for ever on my head to heap
Affliction, and my treacherous guilt confound)
Ev'n from my side my amiable wife
Tore merciless.—My cries, my pray'rs were vain;
Mock'd but with scorn. I saw the barb'rous sword
Plung'd in her bosom. Lost in mute despair,
I clasp'd her dying limbs; her parting breath
Drank with my lips, while she these latest words
Sigh'd out—"My daughter—is"—Death chok'd the rest.
Oh! this terrific picture often haunts
My soul, and me with folly dread upbraids.
My suff'rings all are merited, and I
Bear patient all: but deep within me springs
Implacable abhorrence of a foe,
Savage as this, that in my bosom swells
Secret desire insatiate, to avert
My country's mis'ries, and these horrid men

Total extirpate.—Could I e'er myself
Reign single, then methinks my wish, my pow'r,
Would render England happier, and myself
Belov'd by virtuous men, while I perform'd
Good actions ere I die.—But why indulge
Vain thoughts like these? No! we must now be slaves
Eternally; and I the dreadful doom
Cannot prevent, or flee. My people else
(Mine do I call them?) in the mad attempt
Soon in one common heap were murder'd all."—

Deep-struck, the friendly Bernulph heard the griefs
Of his repentant chief secret-reveal'd,
And trusty thus adjoins. "Let not the air
Whisper of these your feelings, or your mien
Bewray your inward heart: else sure that fate
Which tenderly you deprecate, will fall
On you, on me, and all your subject pow'rs;
Spar'd not by cruel Oskital, but doom'd
With just pretext to glut his wanton ire.
Safe in my heart your words have sunk, and there
Brooding shall lie conceal'd, till prosperous time
Wing them with action meet, and full revenge
Burst on th' infernal foe. Henceforth with me
Confide your inmost thoughts, so lightlier borne
Partaken, nor o'ercharging thus your heart.—
Now part we strait to unsuspected sleep."

He said, and separating, each retir'd
To his own thoughtful couch, while dismal night

Now o'er the world her masked mysteries led,
And all was hush'd in silent rest, save when
The dark'ning blasts roll'd hollow o'er the sky,
Thro' which at times the reeling stars swift gleam'd,
As in alarmed haste. Conscious they seem'd
Of some portentous terror seen below.
Nor were not dreadful horrors wak'd: for now,
Hid in the womb obscure of hov'ring clouds,
The prince of darkness thro' the sullen air
Pass'd with his congregated pow'rs; and eyed
Cautious the English camp, conspiring fierce
Imaginations, and unutter'd schemes
Of deadliest import. He arous'd to rage
And aggravated malice, bore in mind
The angels' interposing pow'r, which sav'd
England from total ruin: and revenge
Burnt in his tortur'd soul. With studious ken
He had observ'd the scenes that late employ'd
The Danish hosts: their strange religious rites,
Their savage tempers, their commuted vows
To conquer England, and Christ's peaceful faith
Total extirpate. Sore-disturb'd and big
With meditated wiles, th' infernal King
Convokes his dark colleagues to distance far
Beyond the Pagan camp, so to escape
All observation, and his secret thoughts
Deep with conspiracy there safe unfold.
Now amid hideous night inclos'd, and far
Shadow'd by gather'd storms, whose view forebode
Approach, hell's haughty Monarch thus display'd

V. 1043—1072

His purpos'd soul.

" Princes of hell, and pow'rs
Mighty to stand against heav'n's armed hosts,
Listen my ponder'd meditations. Sad
And rack'd with indignation, we have seen
Angelic pow'rs by subtlest art defeat
Designs by us matur'd, which else had won
England in conquest irresistible
Thro' all her provinces, and full-o'erwhelm'd
Her sole defensive host. Whence we ere long
Easy had then accomplish'd plans, before
Concerted: here to colonize the Danes,
And found idolatry, eternal wars,
Ruin and murder: and for ever crush
Christ's meek religion, now throughout the earth
Wide-spreading, gaining root, and threat'ning thus
To rob us of a subject race of men,
Doom'd else to people hell; unless our arm
Can stop its progress, and our own proud sway
Maintain superior. True; oppos'd and check'd
Thus by the arts and pow'r of angel-slaves
Descended to its aid from heav'n's proud courts,
Not without toil we win dominion high,
Yet these are fear'd not, nor endur'd by spirits
Great, haughty, potent, whom my honour'd reign
Boasts to command in hell. Wherefore my fix'd
Resolve is to oppose with ampler pow'r
Their utmost opposition, and effect
Certain our labour'd purpose. Soonest then
To win these vast atchievements, my intent

Delib'rate deems from hell's dark realms to fetch
Hither my fiercest spirits, whose deep malice
Unknown to our exulting foes, shall swell
Fuller our present numbers. Nor delay
Shall intervene, ere from the murky dens
And fiery regions of th' infernal world,
Assembling legions hither shall conjoin
Pow'r adequate, and to that angel-crew
Shall prove my former threats not vain, when they
See on themselves tremendous fury pour'd
And vengeance diabolical, which soon,
Their meaner might excelling, shall defeat
Their subtlest machinations, and secure
Our empire large, and all our proud designs.
Great is this embassy, of import high
Demanding weightiest confidence: assign'd
Therefore to no weak hand, but I myself
Will undertake the solemn charge. Direct
Hence parting, I will sail from off this earth
Thro' the round universe, with stars, or suns,
Or worlds, innumerous fill'd, until beyond
Creation's utmost limits, I arrive
That chaos dire of matter uncreate,
In which, amid the infinite of space
Yet uninhabited, desolate, dark,
Lies hid my own dread world, whose regions wide
Own me their Sov'reign Monarch, and my throne,
Shrin'd in majestic darkness, or involv'd
In rays of gloomy fire, high-lifts its state
And holds in subject awe a race of spirits

Noble and bold, once habitants of heav'n.
Their populous numbers shall ere long be swell'd
With countless legions of the race of men
Borne thither from this earth, after sure death
Has clos'd their sinful life, which we must strive
Therefore by strong temptations to involve
In habits long of evil, and withdraw
Ever from good, while we our hid design
Veil with a shew of pleasure and delight,
Bait easily attracting foolish men
In this probationary state. True, some
Aware, will 'scape our wiliest arts: but these
Shall not be many. So alluring we
Will hold the trancing snares, that their embrace,
Tho' under semblance beautiful, shall prove
The gulph of death and hell. Collecting soon
Spirits most subtle and malignant, I
Will with these pow'rs return to earth, and proud
Rejoin your waiting counsels: ready then
On our astonish'd foes to burst, and vent
Terrors yet unimagin'd, that shall strike
Angels in dumb amaze, unconscious whence
We draw these horrors and portentous arts.
Meanwhile proceed ye your assistant skill
T' exert in guarding these our Danes. Delude,
Deceive, as best ye may, th' angelic bands,
Now eagerly employ'd the English host
To re-assemble, and their shatter'd force
Augment. No operations high as yet
Will need my presence.—Alfred's chiefs are gone

Each to his province, there to band new aids
Who may recruit their ruin'd pow'rs: the toil
Not of a day. Himself the English King
Occupied to instruct a peasant train
To deeds of arms, not yet his waited host
Will lead tow'rd these the future fields of blood.
Here will inactive rest th' exulting Danes,
Refresh'd by feasts and martial sports. Yourselves
Suffice to shield, till my return, whate'er
Of harm immediate our unwary foes
Might plot against our camp, both armies now
Pausing, thro' objects various. While I
On more important cares and high designs
Am call'd awhile. Be vigilant: remain
Firm in your station, and abandon fear.
Now leave me unattended, while I part
In secret, and elude th' angelic watch."

He spoke: his wicked legions high applaud
His wisdom and sublime intent: and soon
Obey his mighty mandate; slow along
Removing their dark-volum'd shapes. Immense
Diffus'd away, obscure in night, unseen,
Likest some cloudy storm, th' infernal King
Pass'd awful, soon mysterious-lost, while rais'd
Aloft on outspread wings 'mid seeming winds
And trailing meteors, artful-form'd, he flew
With swiftness inconceivable beyond
Terrestrial gaze, steering his wond'rous course
Thro' all creation tow'rd his own dread world:

ARGUMENT OF BOOK V.

Satan arrives at his world, which he traverses. Its terrors described. He ascends his throne; then convoking all the infernal spirits, he explains to them the reason of his coming, and declares that new and more subtle powers are necessary to be employed against the angels. They refer the machination of these to himself. He then advises that a new legion shall return with him to earth, who shall assume the shapes and attributes of the Pagan Deities, in whom the Danes believe, and shall appear to them, as occasion may require, in order to heighten their fury and enthusiam for battles. This counsel approved, he selects a new legion, who fly with Satan through hell, and at last arrive at the outer boundary or wall of the chaos, within which hell lay. Satan and his host pass through a long and dangerous cave or passage, which had been wrought through chaos by the labour of the demons, opposite man's earth. They stop at its entrance, and after awhile planning their voyage, involve themselves in darkness, and in the semblance of a cloud are driven through the universe, till they plunge amidst the sea, within which they remain a short time. Then discovering England, they join the other infernal powers whom Satan had left. Satan immediately proceeds to execute his purposes of illusion, and appears to the whole Danish army in the shape of Odin, the God of war, exciting them by his gestures to battles and devastation. The Danes are rendered ungovernably furious, which the angels observing, discover at length the deceits of Satan and his new forces. Michael the supreme archangel considers the angelic powers insufficient to contend with them, and therefore, that it has become necessary for him to depart to heaven to fetch a new band of angels. After leaving directions to his associates for their conduct in his absence, Michael departs with a train of attendants to heaven.

ALFRED.

BOOK V.

V. 1—19.

MEANWHILE th' infernal Monarch, on his flight
Arriv'd within his dreadful world, explor'd
The hidden region where exalted stood
His vast-o'ershadowing throne: but while aloft,
Floating on buoyant wings, he urg'd his way
Amid th' illimitable dark, no beam
Gleaming from off a waste of ghastly fire
Piloted sure his course. For thro' that world,
Form'd in the deepest womb of chaos, all
Was horrid and confus'd, wild, desart, dire.
The hand of THE ETERNAL, perfect-pure,
Was pain'd, nor could endure to form throughout
A world where all must be impure and evil,
Fit for its bad possessors, where alone
Justice to mercy could allow no part.
Here chaos with tumultuous dissonance
Roar'd, furious to be thus displac'd, whose din
Disturb'd the ear of Satan, as he sail'd
Silent beneath a boundless firmament:

Not arch'd, as he beheld man's glorious sky,
But one drear plain, a pitchy canopy,
Shapeless, and without end, stretching away
On ev'ry side, beyond his utmost ken.
There stationary oft he hung, aghast,
And mark'd if no apparent moon or star,
Or what seem'd such, roll'd in that firmament,
Whose glimm'ring view might yield a guiding ray.
But never yet wan moon or twinkling star
There own'd a place; nor ever cheerful dawn
Spread forth her bright pavilion in the east,
Announcing proud a golden sun's approach.
Terror is there the firmament, who high
Hov'ring for ever, her vast iron wings
Spreads out from pole to pole, involving all
That obscure world, thence scattering ceaseless down
Horrible shades; and from her thousand mouths,
Awfully silent, hid, more pois'nous fell
Than deadliest Upas, thro' the murky air
Breathes misery.
Low beneath him Satan sees
Vast lakes, or seas irregular, of fire
Impure, with elements commingled crude,
Essence combustible and sulphurous spume;
Whose latent seeds, exhaustless-blending, each
From each supported, in impetuous rage
Conflicting, torn, with dark-expanded surge
For ever swelling roar'd. Ascending slow
From off their fiery surface, volumes vast
Of smoke in sullen and successive trains,

Diffus'd afar, for this world heap'd aloft
Clouds that distill'd not dews or rain, but all
Pregnant with death. The solid continent
That seem'd as land, was sole a nameless heap
Of unessential matter, to the feet
Faithless, and like some quicksand waste, or dross
Of scorch'd bituminous lava, hollow-stor'd
With hot materials: yet not less uprear'd
Mountains immense aloft, whose flamy bulk
Hideous, or curling tops, upborne amid
Those smould'ring clouds, their flying King in vain
Sought now to trace, yet faint he might discern
Dreadful impending crags on high, that still
Totter'd and rock'd, and ev'ry moment seem'd
Descending with resistless death to crush
Th' incautious wanderer.
Hurrying thence appall'd
He glides away, when thro' the devious void
Urging his haggard track, sudden, unlook'd,
A suffocating vapour from below
Repels him struck, and warns him to recede
That dreadful place; for conscious now he hangs
O'er horrid precipices, vacuous, vast,
Of depth unknown: since never yet in hell
Spirit audacious had been found, who dar'd
By downward flight precipitate explore
What horrible contents, mysterious, own
These yawning, blind, inhabitable caves.
Yet went a fame in hell, that either here
Are hid from view the inexhausted stores

Prime of the burning soil and surging seas;
Or else, (opinion oft discuss'd by fiends)
That here perhaps are lodg'd those future plagues
And tortures, such as not hell's fiercest spirits
Unterrified conceive, more dire than all
Themselves see, hear, or feel; and sole-reserv'd
By doom eternal, till that last great day,
When the created universe must end
In ruins, but this world of woe remain,
Where then for ever must be doom'd to dwell
Another race of beings, like themselves,
A race of men. Then doubtless must be loos'd
The terrors of these gulfs, to prey on them,
And work worse misery than ev'n fiends endure.
Nor without justice: men must sure be deem'd
Condign of heavier punishment than they:
Since first by God in his own image form'd
Of his spontaneous goodness: and when fall'n
Thro' Satan's arts, then by a God redeem'd
To second bliss. So double then appears
The debt of love and gratitude they owe,
More than the rebel angels, who from God
Receiv'd their blest creation, but when fall'n
No love to second happiness restor'd:
Double with justice then man's punishment,
On such as with more black ingratitude
Forget their state, and spurn, and mock God's laws.
Thus reason of these gulfs hell's native spirits.

Now Satan o'er the verge indignant borne

Of those abysses dire, and forcing on
His viewless passage with intrepid wings,
All-sudden falls, nor unalarm'd perceives
His palsied form dragg'd headlong swiftly down
By some invisible, resistless pow'r,
Perhaps the Spirit of these loathed shades,
Awaiting here his prey. Striving in vain
Upward to mount, then first Satan knew fear.
He shouted, deeming that his piercing cry
Might call some vent'rous spirit who above
Near might be flying, instant to descend
With needful aid. But none appear'd. His shouts
Serve but on ev'ry side from thousand caves
Unseen, to swell dire echoes of his voice
Bellowing around, convolving all their roars
In fearful mockery of his deep distress.
Thus urg'd along, unconscious now which way,
Or fall'n how deep, arous'd by strong despair,
In one last mighty effort he collects
What of his own enormous pow'r remains.
Sudden by force invincible, he checks
His light'ning course, with difficulty freed
From that fell grasp, till struggling fierce, at last
Balanc'd on slowly-wafting wings, he turns
His huge Typhœan bulk. Upward he flies,
Outstretching wide his pois'd inquiring arms
That sought some guide thro' total night, and felt
Those hollow-sounding depths, whose dark expanse
Re-echoes dismal, till thro' many a maze
Retracing long his weary way, at last

He gains the clouded mouth, and scarce with joy
Escapes, all-wond'ring, terrified, asham'd.

V. 139—167.

Returning now converse tow'rd inner hell,
Stretching past sight drear wildernesses, dark,
Assail his view, coasting those fiery seas,
Peopled with savage beasts of hideous bulk
And thousand ghastly shapes, all roaming fell,
All evil, suited to the horrid ends
Of wicked spirits, ministers of ill.
Monsters malignant, whose perverse delight
Is still to terrify the fiends they serve,
And with more hated ruin to confound
Hell's native gloom and misery. Employ'd
They seem, and on some deathful scheme intent
As if in secret, and prepar'd outstretch
In congregated bands their grizly forms,
O'ershadowing such a space, that thence no eye
Plain may discern their shadowy size, and tear
Furious the quiv'ring soil, in masses huge
Shatter'd around, while thousand hideous yells
Join differing sounds in one astounding roar.
Nor from insatiate havoc had they ceas'd,
Save that sagacious of some spirit nigh,
Hov'ring aloft amid the pregnant clouds,
Subtle they knew th' infernal King, when strait
All for a moment resting quick-uprear,
Surpriz'd, their frightful heads, that shew'd their eyes
Sullenly glaring, like vast balls of fire
Or as innumerous comets from afar

Red-blazing thro' the dark. With eager joy
Or furious rage transported, instant all
Rising in countless multitudes, aloft
Soar thro' the air, their shrieks and flapping wings
Deaf'ning all other sounds. Sudden they fall
Amphibious, prone, amid the burning seas:
There plunging deep, numberless fathoms down,
As a dead mass at first, now turn'd they stop,
And by sheer force from their abyss upheave
Vast-surging waves, lifted to height unwont
By these fierce monsters. Strait collecting half
The boundless lakes, before them they impel
Masses of liquid flames, with all their store
Of wond'rous habitants, and sever'd rocks,
Immense leviathans, as islands huge,
Behemoths, crocodiles, and sharks of hell:
Hurried resistless onward, till their load
Full from its bed outlifting, all the shores,
Delug'd with fire, ingulf another sea.
Effus'd by thousands o'er those fateful coasts,
Deserted, to the view now forth appear
The hidden monsters of the flamy deep;
Terrific, dire, such as those ruinous beasts
And demons shrink to view. Motionless first
These lie, as dead, stunn'd by th' enormous shock.—
Not long repos'd, for lo! with gradual pow'r
Most seem reviving: with slow crash some ope,
Gasping, their gulfy jaws: some broad expand
Their massive scales; sudden some spout aloft
Torrents of fire and blood: till all to life

Restor'd, the boundless shore shews one dread scene
Of mix'd commotion: here in sullen rage
Incumbent hills with such tumultuous weight
Pealing the ground, that all the loosen'd coasts
Tremble: here formless shapes on finny feet
Stalk on with hurried pace: slow some away
Cumbrously trail along their spiral length
Voluminous, while 'mid the dusky air
Some waft on scaly wings their confus'd way.
All uttering deep tremendous-mingling roars,
Which in their louder clamour drown the yells
Of the fierce beasts, rioting high above,
Exulting in their havoc and uproar
Accurst, abominable.
Satan saw
Th' intolerable ruin, and aghast
In conscious agony and mute despair
Reflecting on heav'n's glories lost, and these
Horrible furies his eternal lot,
Shudd'ring, much wonders that as yet his eye
None of heav'n's fallen spirits in his flight
Had mark'd; but they aware of dangers dread
Impending, by this ominous tumult warn'd
Of the fell beasts, (wont presage, that foretold
Infernal tempests nigh,) in trooping crowds
Previous had fled, seeking in rocky caves
Refuge from perilous destruction, known
Approaching. Nor in vain their cautious fears.
For lo! none other monitory sign
Portentous giv'n, th' infuriate vengeance 'gins.

Such the fell nature of that treacherous ground,
Raging thro' all its depths, and hence such war
Of elements had been conceiv'd below, that now
Contain'd no longer, with tremendous roars,
Infernal earthquakes, in explosion vast
Burst into thousand boundless gulfs at once,
Tearing all hell: whose yawning chasms receive
Ranges of mountains falling, more in bulk,
In number more, than Alps and Appennines
Together heap'd. No sooner there inclos'd
Than back by eddying whirlwinds instant hurl'd
Thro' those re-open'd gulfs: and borne aloft
Sailing along amid the lurid air
In one dread range, o'ershadowing half hell's climes—
Till plunging, on each other dash'd, in such
Storm inconceivable, as ne'er must know
God's good creation till that last great day
When all the frame of nature shall dissolve,
And blazing all heav'n's ruin'd worlds shall fall,
Headlong they sink amid those fiery seas
Lost in the dire abysses, or perhaps
Ev'n to this moment falling. Then unspent
The furious hurricanes, with sure dire plagues
Loaded of dust and poison, as surpass
The dread simooms, which on Arabian wilds
Uptear whole sandy deserts, burying deep
Camels, and caravans in endless train,
Themselves then dart upon those swelling seas,
And from low deeps the billowing flamy mass
Lashing in spiral whirls, at distance due

V. 228—257.

Form thousand pyramids of liquid fire:
The spouts of hell; which stalking to the shores,
Enormous burst at length, continuous dash'd
Afar, and overwhelm immeasur'd space
With foaming ruins. Nor less dire on land
Confusion reigns: for soon the mingling rage
Lets loose the thunder of these regions. Now
Gathering from all those rounding climes, it rolls
And swelling bellows thro' dark-vaulted caves
And ruinous gulfs of earthquakes, this whole world
Filling with such unknown, astounding roars
That all the rage combin'd of storming hell
Yields not such horror. Then for very fear
Ev'n those fierce beasts, to whom the sole delight
Is madd'ning desolation, into caves
Disorder'd troop, but refuge find not there.
Satan himself under a mighty rock
Creeps, low'ring his proud flight, now deem'd unsafe
Amid such dire commotion. While the storm
To its own devastation left, uncheck'd,
Augmented rages, and thro' endless realms
Tumultuously careers: till flashing broad
In pale continuous sheets, hell's light'nings shot
Streaming with sulph'rous blaze, now destin'd fire
The hot volcanic matter, glowing round.
Instant throughout all hell, horrific burst
Thousand volcanos, rivalling in noise
Th' infernal thunders, to whose rage compar'd
Vesuvius, Ætna, Hecla, have no name.
For lo! unnumber'd craters, blazing dark,

Circling-immeasur'd, furious spout aloft
Seas of fus'd metals, raining ashes, smoke,
And rocks of solid fire; which rolling vast
Upward against the topmost cope of hell
Dash, struck; and higher would ascend, if space
Higher were given. In that moment view'd,
If eye durst look, those dreadful masses seem'd
Ten thousand blazing columns, propping hell;
Reaching from her unfathom'd depths, a space
Thrice higher than the vaulted roof of heav'n.
Disparting soon, repell'd, on either side,
In double cataracts, downward they roll;
Cataracts, to whose noise, or pow'r, compar'd
A thousand Niagáras were a rill:
Enlarging still in breadth, as prone they fall,
Tho' oft oppos'd by jutting rocks that hung
Viewless in air, alike down dash'd, and soon
Under vast heaps of fiery ruins hid:
Huge-swelling, ceaseless, till at length they form
Other more hideous mountains, crimson-red,
Gradual-ascending to hell's murky top.
Terror herself, who there incumbent lies,
Herself then trembles, and convuls'd with fear,
Shrinks upward; shaking from her iron wings,
That sound from pole to pole, if pole there be,
Her embryo light'nings, forky, livid, dark,
Brooding beneath her shade, or ghastly forms,
That or by thousands in the surging flames
Fall headlong, suffocated, or along
Waft thro' the livid air their scorpion trains.

While from the burning hills and wavy seas
Volumes of sable poison roll convolv'd
O'er all that shadowy world, with such a veil
Low-spreading ev'ry spot, that total hell
Is lost in murkiest darkness, long to dure
Ere all its hurricanes with mingling pow'r
Can dissipate th' essential night, and slow
Restore the wont pale glare. Earth, air, sea, fire,
And nameless elements, raging convuls'd,
Storm in such tumult, that th' infernal King
Pond'ring in obscure silence their event,
Deems that all hell, unable to endure
Shocks of such mighty war, had gone to wrack,
And, lost all poise, the tott'ring barriers burst
Of chaos, and hell's world in ruins flown,
Loose o'er the universe of light. But God
Omnipotent, he knew, had erst forbade
Havoc so dread, and uncreated space
Infinite, and the void, unpeopled realms
Of desolate chaos in firm bonds inclos'd
From mad irruption o'er creation's worlds
Of light and order.

Satan now in haste
Deeming his eager ken had late observ'd
By the dim radiance of the stormy blaze
His high-uplifted throne, prepares for flight,
And floating vast amid the pervious dark,
Sensible night, o'er many a region past
That own'd him Monarch, till at last he gains
Th' imperial eminence, whose stately brow

Displays, proud-rais'd, his throned seat, inclos'd
Under a canopy of flaming rocks
Carv'd with magnific art, nor wanting pomp
Of regal ornament, gems, gold, and shine
Of glorious majesty, concent'ring rays
Of seeming splendor, that the blush of morn
Resemble cheerful, or the dewy light
Of purple-beaming eve, tho' oft obscur'd
By dim obtrusive clouds, that sullen roll
Their black-involving shades. Here Satan soon
Stood, terrible, prepar'd th' assembly high
Of all his subject spirits to convoke,
Lab'ring thro' endless regions to oppose
And frustrate God's just will. Obscure he stood,
And rear'd aloft, half-seen, his dreadful shape;
Then from beside his sceptred seat took down
Th' infernal trumpet, where it hung conceal'd
Within an arching cave, which to his mouth
Apply'd, throughout its spacious concave took
His full-expanded blast, and forth outsent
Noise, dire-astounding, roll'd-continuous, deep,
Louder than all th' artillery discharg'd
Conjunct of armed hosts, in battle join'd.
Sound, that was giv'n to pierce beyond the bounds
Of hell, assailing soon the conscious ken
Of all his evil ministers, where'er
Employ'd, thro' hell, chaos, or desolate space
Yet unexplor'd, or 'mid creation's worlds:
And swell'd by rage, on earth ev'n mortal men
Terrified, seeming to their startled ears

As far-off thunder. Hell deep-shook; and all
Her mingling tempests, in a moment, all,
Silent were aw'd.

V. 378—407.

Her subject spirits, dispers'd
Various, prepare alike their Sov'reign's call
T' await. Legions, the subtlest part, thro' hell
Deep-hid in caves, their gloomy works depose,
Where amid agonizing shrieks, and cries
Of torture, sobs, and long-drawn groans of death,
Still they construct dire plagues, thence to be sent
On earth, that make man's else delightful world
Like their own hell. Here murders have their birth,
Ingratitude, malignant hate, revenge,
Suspicious envy, dark hypocrisy,
Malice 'twixt former friends, old parents' tears
For children grown rebellious, burning lust,
Intoxicating draughts, pride, blasphemies,
Whose dreadful machination utters sounds
Of deepest woe. Some 'neath those fiery seas
Invent dire schemes of war and fields of blood
Where man shall slaughter man: and still delight
To aid the wrong, and hinder willing peace,
By insults still renew'd. Busied were all
In whatsoever place, disorders, crimes
And misery consequential to instruct.
Now furious, darkly-seen, stalking they come
From out their hollow dens and deep abodes,
Pois'd on broad sails innumerous. Swift they rush
Thro' hell's black, lonely passages: full soon
Follow'd by trooping shapes of equall'd bulk,

(Wond'rous to tell) from many a distant world
At their great Sov'reign's voice, with light'ning speed
Ev'n now return'd: all wafted far and wide
Cutting their way thro' air, that nought is heard
Thro' those vast regions, save the sullen sound
Of waving pinions, like the gathering roar
Of mighty floods, or as the thund'rous noise
Of multitudinous chariots in array
Hurried to battle by fierce-neighing steeds.
All fast convene tow'rd that imperial hill,
Wont place of council, where sublime it stood
Center of hell, round whose magnific height,
Thro' lofty-vaulted space the Demons sweep
On hov'ring wings. Here the glad sight survey'd
Columns of pallid lustre, art-dispos'd,
Of broad stupendous frame, which proud upbore
A gorgeous-circling dome, and pomp within
As of monarchal grandeur, now perceiv'd,
But late in darkness veil'd. The rush of wings
Stiller bespoke that all hell's subject pow'rs
Assembled held their place. Deep silence reign'd.
High in the midst upon his sable throne
Satan majestic sat. His lofty form
None might discern, save when the sudden gleam
Of some dark-flaming billow, surging vast,
Thro' sinking clouds with momentary flash
Half shew'd him terrible, and swift display'd
A range immense of hideous crowded forms
Silent awaiting round. The fearful sight
Seem'd, (if with earthly scene it holds compare)

V. 468—497.

As when a trav'ler, on some lofty hill
Benighted, when fierce winds foretel a storm
And spreading light'nings in pale sheets of fire
Flash broad with swiftly-transient blaze, while scarce
The moon thro' moving clouds a frighted glance
Darts wild, then sees the vast horizon round
And vaulted heav'n, what time assembling dark
The Spirits of the tempest haste to whelm
Destruction far and wide, by sea, by land,
On ships, and tow'rs, and all the works of man.

Now all was still as death, when hell's proud King
Awful arose, involv'd in shades: he stood
Tow'ring before their eyes, yet none his shape
Perfect discern'd: his rising shook with fear
The boldest spirits, while aloft they gaz'd
Wond'ring: his right arm seem'd to wield afar
A kingly sceptre; and at times reveal'd,
The dubious sight imag'd his haughty brows
Crown'd with a pond'rous mass of dusky gold
Or diamonds, sullen-ray'd. At last from mid
Th' uncertain darkness came a voice, whose roar,
As of a tempest, shook hell's hollow depths.

"Pow'rs deathless, progeny of heav'n, once slaves,
Now mighty Gods, not to heav'n's King himself
Owning obedience, but his dreaded foes, whose proud
Glory is now to win august revenge
On him, th' Omnipotent, whose tyrant reign
Your noble spirits endur'd not, but preferr'd

Boundless dominion o'er all other worlds,
(Heav'n's servile courts resign'd) and me have chos'n
Your honour'd chief monarchal, you I call
From universal worlds and space unknown
Against his unrelenting hate to wield
Contempt and malice equal. True, for us
In this incarcerating den, heav'n's King,
Glutting his iron vengeance, pain and death
Unutterable broods, for tort'ring woes
Ransacks invention, and astonish'd hell
Vexes with tempests, that the barriers shake
Of chaos. But in vain the Tyrant hopes
Us with these terrors to alarm. Behoves
His pow'rfullest Omnipotence to send
Horrors unspeakable, tremendous storms,
Hurricanes, darkness, thunders, earthquakes, fires,
If here he deems to hold us, or defend
Hell's boundaries, else by us with instant pow'r
Torn into atoms, thro' th' incumbent mass
Confounded all of chaos, and o'erwhelm'd
In mightiest ruins irresistible
Upon creation's worlds; so to destroy
All his fair universe. But tho' restrain'd
Within this hideous cavern, our revenge
Can ponder machinations, and construct
Atchievements, whose sole fame shall fill all heav'n
With fearful horror, and ourselves exalt
As equal to th' Almighty, nor permit
Those angel slaves, amid celestial realms,
Pleasures ineffable and bliss supreme

V. 526—555.

Eternal to enjoy, while we immur'd
In this dark world of death are doom'd to share
Unending misery. Then (with bitter pangs
Of deep remorse to torture us the more)
We must behold our own lost place supplied
With earthly men, uplifted into heav'n,
Tho' losing too their pledge and claim of bliss,
Yet thro' mysterious love divine and death
Of an atoning Christ, a God made Man,
Redeem'd to second favour, and if train'd
In habits good during a transient life
Probationary on their native earth,
Then after tranquil death (their primal doom)
Translated into better life, to heav'n,
To bliss eternal, then themselves become
Angels, and glorious spirits, who shall know
And utterly deride us here inclos'd
From light and bliss. Oh! agonizing thoughts!—
But whither am I led?—All this remains,
Possible only, not perform'd. Our part
Grand, formidable, vast (as proof shall soon
Testify) yet remains. By subtlest arts
And tempting guise, still-watchful, to seduce
Men from known duty, difficult and hard
Constant to be preserv'd: and, when entic'd,
Thro' gentle obvious pleas to hold in guilt,
Till harden'd, blind, they mock instruction, lost
In habits evil and perverse. So we
Shall by supplanting piety to God,
Love to mankind, due rev'rence of themselves,

Their tri-une duty, fit the race of men
To fill hell's boundless empires, and to share
With us these stormy horrors, not for us
Form'd only, but another people, fall'n,
Ev'l as ourselves. But this magnific end
Demands our ardent labours. Now thro' earth
O'er many a region of the human world,
Christ's meek and peaceful doctrines, heav'n-reveal'd,
(Our curst grand enemy) calm-beaming, spread,
And soon in one high-favor'd isle shall gain
Reception universal, if our arts
Prevent not, and subvert the busy aid
Of angel-pow'rs, and th' unexampled toils
Of a proud Monarch, lab'ring there to found
A kingdom where religion, knowledge, peace
Shall reign, while time itself shall dure. Nor mean
The danger. From the pow'r and rising state
Of this concerted empire and the wide
Influence of its observ'd example, soon
Thro' many a clime, now veil'd in barb'rous night,
The full contagion would intrude uncheck'd,
Of light and truth. Then should we see no more
Fierce Pagan superstitions which inspire
Men with insatiate thirst for war and blood,
Murders of innocence, Christ's temples raz'd,
Mad ignorance, devote idolatry,
Infuriate havoc, spareless rapine, crimes,
Ruin, and fiery death: men then become
Proselytes to the rays of heav'nly joy,
Order, and peace, and love. Hence, hateful scene!

V. 586—615.

By us forbidden! We instead concert
Wars endless, desolations uncontroll'd,
Whose fury irresistible shall whelm
Perdition on all efforts to oppose
Our aims, by angels utter'd, or by men.
True, late on earth, our hastier schemes, construct
With no consid'rate zeal, were haply foil'd
By angel-arts. But now from earth I come
My fiercest legions to collect, and thus
At large propound our views, that all hell's spir'ts,
Consulting thus assembled, may devise
Plans of dark, hellish import, whose deep craft
And subtlety, surpassing angel-thoughts,
May, borne from hence to earth, all-sudden burst
On our astonish'd foes, and speediest win
Our utmost wish. Speak therefore, who combines
Vengeance and malice, potent to contrive
Schemes of eternal hate 'gainst nature's God,
And angel-slaves, and men, who strive with them
T' assimilate, unless our art obstruct
Their three-fold machinations, and atchieve
Dominion uncontroll'd o'er all the earth."

He ceas'd, and Silence like the dead of night
Paus'd awful, in deliberation deep
Holding the vast assemblage, till at last
Some dread-responding voice, unknown amid
Darkness, yet whose authoritative tone
Argued some mighty state, aloud return'd.

" Monarch of hell, of that exalted name
Sole worthy, since to thee not sole 'tis giv'n
Us highly to surpass in might and pow'r
But more in deep and subtlest wisdom, thou
Th' Archangel, highest, wisest, erst in heav'n;
Scarce second ev'n to God, ere noblest sense
Of just ambition prompted thee to reign,
Why should'st thou seek of us to frame new wiles
Of wisdom equal to so grand a cause?
Should all these myriads diff'ring counsel urge
Successive, each improving each, yet soon
Thy single thought in subtlety of art
And ponder'd guile would all their schemes excel
And their united wisdom far outshine.
Speak thou then, solely potent to advise
Wiles of more deep imagination, fit
To hinder and o'er-whelm angelic pow'r,
And our imperial aims, uncheck'd, insure."

The voice was silent. From th' assembly rose
A gen'ral murmur of applause, that roll'd
As roars some furious torrent thro' the glades
Of an o'ershadow'd vale, where Solitude
Starts as she hears th' impetuous horror rage
Among her hollow dells and arching rocks.
The Prince of darkness with the flattering sound
In secret pleas'd, stood like a pyramid
Uprais'd aloft 'mid Egypt's scorching plains,
Within whose mighty bulk successive Kings
Slumber for ages in unfading death.

Till Silence anxious waiting, Satan now
Proudly his forethought counsels thus reveal'd.

V. 673—701.

" Since me then worthy sole (honour which I
Disclaim amid assembled Gods) your voice
Deems to concert imaginations new,
Subtler and fiercer for our want, and big
With fury rising to augmented cause,
Listen my preconcerted thoughts, effect
Of meditation deep and brooded ire.
We see the Pagan Danes with restless thirst
Smitten of blood and death, thro' wild belief,
Most solemn and devout, of fancied Gods,
Delighting, as they deem, in slaught'rous war
Thought the sole school of heroes, fitted thence
For high translation from the field of death
To realms celestial, there to practise wars
And proud defend the Gods (honour denied
To cowards, or the ag'd, or who shall die
But by the vi'lent sword) during a space
Of intervening ages, till the day
Awful arrive, when nature's waiting foes
Assembled shall invade their heav'n, and end
In fiery ruins all creation's worlds.
Full of this dreadful faith, each meanest Dane,
Ignorant of Christ's milder doctrines, true
As heav'n from whence they sprung, glories to yield
His life in bloody battle, and to shun
The doom of cowards, endless misery.
If therefore we by guile and subtle arts

'Mid the deluded Danes this Pagan faith
To fury can augment, that it shall taint
Each thought and action with redoubled rage,
Responsive to our purpose, till itself
Our highest instrument become to whelm
Destruction on our foes, and we can thus
Eradicate the Christians, and the Dane
Establish victor, who his martial faith
And fierce idolatry, wars, blood, and crimes
Shall found eternal, 'twere a proud emprize.
List then: the means are easy. Let us choose
Of subtlest, fiercest spirits known in hell
A legion-band, who speeding to man's earth
May hover o'er the Pagans. There at will
Each, as occasion best beseems, assume
The visual shape and ensigns of the Gods,
In whom they trust: who oft, they deem, descend
From heav'n to join their battles, to direct
The slaughter, and to mark the mighty deeds
Of emulous heroes, till o'erwhelm'd in death,
Celestial cars receive their souls in bliss.
Let us in battles, like these fancied Gods,
Visibly oft appear, or, as befits,
In secret animate the Danes, and prompt
Observe their proffer'd pray'rs, and oft by signs
And omens of success augment and rouse
Their credulous ardor.—With such transport then
Of mad enthusiasm shall we fire their souls,
When their own Gods they see assist their wars,
And gratify their pray'rs, not dubious then,

But visible and plain, that like a storm
Of Hell, resistless they shall instant whelm
In final overthrow the Christian hosts,
And all our mighty hopes total atchieve.
These are my meditations. If by you
Approv'd, be this your signal of applause,
Deep silence. Shout not, lest the gen'ral roar
Reach the quick senses of those angel slaves,
In heav'n adoring, or thro' boundless space
Roaming abroad to serve their master's ends.
Our labours must be secret. No delay
Shall intervene, ere we to earth depart,
Accomplishing our purpose. Yet our arms
Behoves us take, our deadliest arms. With these
Hence let us bear to shroud us and protect
Black clouds and fires of hell, and round us spread
Whirlwinds and hollow thunders: the remains
And refuse of those storms, which late we saw
Raging throughout this world. So when on earth
Mixing amid the battles, should heav'n's slaves,
Descending from the Thunderer's abodes, essay
To banish us, we may ourselves defend
With equal pow'r:—or as occasion calls
Oppose with hostile storm our angel foes;—
Or with Earth's elements, at times, employ
Our dark materials and sulphureous stores.
Best fits it ever with a threat'ning front
T' appear. If ye are silent, we prepare
Instant to fix our novel enterprize."

V. 732—760.

He ended now, and not a murmur breath'd
Amid that vast assemblage. He forbade,
Or those innumerous myriads had a shout
Utter'd, which piercing hell's immeasur'd realms,
Chaos, space infinite, and all the bounds
Of nature's sphere, had ev'n the sons of God
Startled in heav'n. This wily Satan hence
Of wont experience, when th' astounding din
Had drawn observance of applauded schemes,
Which now he fear'd. Strait with imperial voice
He gives command that all th' assembled spirits
Back to their station wont, and known employ,
Return with speedy wing, save those alone
Whom his directive call summons by name.
For well their Monarch knew what fiends renown'd
Of his infernal orders, chief excell'd
In subtle machination and fierce ire.
Sudden throughout the gloomy throng'd expanse
Uprise those winged furies, fanning broad
With cautious-moving vans the murky air.
While Satan, as they rise, a thousand names
Thundering summons: which high-favor'd crew
From 'mid the throng on eager-sounding wings
Spring instant, and aloft exulting soar,
Till form'd in waving balance calm they hang
Around the tow'ring crest of hell's proud King.
While the remaining universal mass
Pass on, obeisant of command, and gaze
Departing with retorted envious glare
On the selected band, left with regret.

Now the retiring hosts in countless throng
Pass to their wont employ, a thousand ways.—
The chosen spirits who impatient fly
In air high-hovering, on expected sign
Down drop innumerous, on resounding plumes
Sweeping. Confer they now short space the plan
Of their departure, which full soon dispos'd,
Sudden with ready zeal at once they rise
All in a body, and on broad wings urge,
Heavy-commoving, their aërial way,
Till in array that high monarchal seat
Saw of their latest rear the dorsal wings
Float away lessening. Soon their various course
Parting, they haste to many a cave, where hid
Lie their infernal arms, while far and wide
Thro' dismal vales secret they ransack hell
Of her dark, stormy terrors. Now with these
Returning, as enjoin'd, they fast convene
Amid a dreary wilderness, near which
Glimmer'd a flamy sea, whose sulph'rous waves
Darkling dispers'd at times a dubious gleam
Around. The native beasts who o'er these wilds
Roam'd, as they mark'd the dread assembly throng,
Angry and sourly slow, in crowds retir'd.
Satan, most fierce, as ever first in arms,
Awaiting his full band, there stalk'd. His steps
Echoed resounding as he strode along
As roars the midnight thunder thro' the dens
Of some impervious vale. Th' uncertain stream
Of paler light disclos'd his awful shield,

Stupendous, huge of bulk, the same dread frame
Which erst in heav'n he had to battle borne
Against God's faithful angels. Then it shone,
Celestial shape too dazzling-bright to view,
Like some illumin'd sun. But since his fall,
Its splendor, shape had chang'd: for nought of heav'n
Could pure as erst in this bad world remain
Where all was evil. Black it seem'd and vast,
Nor less than if upon his arm he bore
A sever'd mountain, veiling his proud form
That none might scan his height. His right-hand held
A spear, sole like the meteor of the night
Which from the pale horizon of the north,
Portending storms, while nations gaze with awe,
Shoots broad and swift, and scales the topmost heav'n.
Round their dread monarch were at length arriv'd
The whole selected legion, seeming all
As Satan arm'd, tho' less in height and shape,
Till soon in quadrate vast of equal breadth,
At distance due he ranges all his host
For flight. Around them wide they roll thick clouds,
Death-charg'd, immix'd with thunders, drawn from caves
Smould'ring with hellish tempest, livid fires,
Whirlwinds, and sulph'rous rains, and pois'nous smoke.—
Th' imperial word is giv'n. Sudden on high
Mount on expanded wings the total mass;
And soon (the sable air obscuring more)
Involv'd in moving darkness, waft along
Their horizontal way, with faces prone
Toward hell's surface, dimly seen below.

So Satan at their head conducts them on
Aloft o'er many a clime, and dreary wild,
O'er yawning gulfs, o'er precipices, seas,
And endless shores. None other sounds were heard;
Save of their flapping wings, which wearied now
Encumber'd with their load, at last attain
That side of hell, which long experience taught
Lay next man's earthy globe, and where began
Imperfect chaos its inclosing wall.

Satan commands: at once in hovering poise
Stop all the host. Suddenly down they fall
Alighting. Instant thousand dreadful roars
Conjoin their deep astound, proclaiming war
Of elements. Behold a wonder! here
Scarce thro' the mantle of thick night discern'd,
Yawning before them lies, dark, hollow, vast,
A vault of height immense that seems to pierce
Far forward into chaos, hell's last bound.
Wide seem'd its arch as is the bow of heav'n,
When opposite the broad, portentous sun
It strides o'er sable clouds from sky to sky.
Now the tir'd legion in prompt order form'd,
All to the entrance of th' enormous chasm
Silent advance. When hark! a piercing shout
That drown'd all other noise of chaos, rose
As if from some dread beings hid within.
The legion stops. Instant hell's furious King
Singly darts forward, and some startled steps
Entering the horrid den, loud call'd. The shout

Ceas'd, when a hollow voice that from above
Seem'd to descend, nor distant far within,
Scarce thro' the noise distinguish'd, thus return'd.

"Hail, King! what mischief new recalls thy steps
Across this vault. Yet rest not thou secure,
Altho' the labour of a thousand years
(A labour worthy fiercest spirits of hell)
Could thro' the midst of this dread matter ope
A long and dismal way, nearest to earth,
That ev'n our utmost toil can still support
The horrid passage, if thou fail to send
Fresh aids of potent angels, to relieve
Our destin'd post, or mitigate at least
A task that single is too hard to dure."

"Peace, Satan cried, and calmly learn to bear
Thy destin'd lot. Ill fits it spirit of hell
Aught to complain. If any dare to quit
His fated task—he knows—Be bold and true."

He said, and instant leads th' expectant hosts
Close to the cave; when lo! before them spread
A black and gulfy road, where dim appear'd,
For ever flitting, dark and fiery gleams
Far inward, further ev'n than keenest sight
Could penetrate, that oft faint-shew'd a vault,
Huge, hideous, such as yet no human eye
Beheld, and Fancy shudders to conceive.
Cautious, in order due, there entering march

Satan and all his pow'rs, in shielding clouds
Enwrapt, when lo! (astonishing to tell!)
High overhead on vast-o'erspreading wings
Upborne, with pain the sight might scarce discern
Numberless demon-forms, who strong-conjoin'd,
Up with exerted might heav'd by main force
The rocking elements. The chaos loose
Deciduous, vainly thousand columns rais'd
Pond'rous aloft, of mighty bulk, assay'd
Sole to support. Continuous from the base
O'ercharg'd by strength unheard infernal spirits,
Rang'd side by side unnumber'd, backward drove
Th' indignant discord. So the banded pow'rs
Satanic move along with eager steps
Under a canopy of outstretch'd wings,
While the high demons, as they mark below
Their Monarch onward lead his lengthen'd host,
Accost his legions with exerted voice.—
They silent hasten on. Above are heard
Crashings of falling rocks, that threat ev'n now
To hide in shapeless ruins all his train
And hell's proud King himself: supplanted soon
By roars of rushing waters, echoing far
Thro' the dark cavern. Next loud hissings rise,
When instant horribly broad sheets of fire
Pallid down-flash, that spite of murkiest shades
Obscure illume afar the dreary path,
And to the ghastly eye sudden disclose
Th' horrific dungeon, stretching beyond sight,
And plain above, lab'ring with gestures fierce

Th' alarmed angels, seeming with fatigue, Book
Ready to fall o'erpower'd. The gleamy light V.
Endur'd not long; for soon apparent tracts
Of earth, revolving with impetuous noise,
Onward resistless drove the fiery mass,
Or whelming deep, extinguish'd all, that now
The universal cave is sudden left
In death-like darkness. Follow furious howls
Of swelling winds, which all the rocking mass
From end to end convulse in horrid war,
Sounding thro' chaos in tremendous peals,
That the high angels, fearful more than wont,
Tho' bred to constant storms, now shout aloud.
But Satan heard unmov'd, whose fix'd command
Erst had ordain'd these fiends of mightier strength
To prop th' incumbent weight, nor e'er would spare
Spirits of subtler nature to their aid.
Furious he strides along with hurried steps,
His legion equal following, by those shouts
Sole guided. He in vain forbade alarm.
An universal terror shook them all,
Usurping sense. Thus long th' innumerous host
Doubting, despairing, pass, thro' many a maze
Turning of that dire vault, by many deem'd
Endless. Oft Satan with exhorting voice
Hearten'd his pow'rs, lest else in panic fear
Till as they journey on forlorn and wild,
Passing a sudden labyrinth, lo! now
Bursts on their startled gaze, at distance seen,
The spacious mouth of that huge cave, that show'd

A collied sullen light of gloomy grey,
Image of vacuous twilight, which first seen
Bordering so sudden on the single dark
Dazzled the view. Joyful advance they on.
Nearer as swift they draw, th' enlarging mouth
Opens in space, and clearer dawn illumes
The doubtful way, till they at last have won
Its utmost verge. All stood, and forward look
Eager upon the nameless void, and space
Infinite, not unpierc'd of dusky light
Incipient, thro' immeasur'd depths, the wide
Barrier which separated other worlds.

Satan immediate on that awful brink
Advanc'd, with voice directive thus instructs
Th' observant hosts, and to his words adjoins
Signals, and points indicative the hand.

"Arriv'd at last, our gladden'd sight beholds
Creation's outer bounds, the confines broad
Of dim-commencing light, whose interval
Of empty dusk divides God's universe
Created fair, from chaos and the realms
Of desolate space, imperfect, increate,
Circling unbounded, without end. This way,
Far to the right, lie heaven's empyreal climes
And realms of bliss, once dwelt by us. Direct
Before us, past this twilight-glimmering space,
Lies God's fair universe, with glorious orbs
Fill'd, and vast worlds roll'd round by beamy suns,

Prolific, darting light and heat. Some wheel'd
Themselves in planetary circles round
Suns fix'd, with gradual motion gently drawn
In soft harmonious order, calmly yield
Concordant music to celestial sense
Thro' ever-varying spheres. Behold! ev'n now
Some mighty orb or world revolving near
Creation's outer marge, appears in view
Advancing hitherward, not full beheld,
Yet dim-discern'd by yon vast shadows thrown,
Moving afar along this ashy air,
And darkening with deep gloom the cloudy space
Of the surrounding atmosphere. Through which
Dividual boundary, swift convey'd amid
The radiant universe, past many a world
Bright or opake, rotative or unmov'd,
Hence we must steer our mindful course, at will
Tortuous or straight, and in one mass conjunct
Pass, fearful of detection, veil'd in clouds,
Like some tempestuous gust by polar winds
Driv'n thro' creation with resistless rage,
Till we arrive at last the ocean wide,
Spread o'er man's globous earth, whose softer space
Shall in its yielding bosom, deep-empierc'd,
Receive us safest, and may mitigate
With gentlest pressure our infuriate fall.
There at our leisure we may best compose
What dissarray may foil our wearied strength
Worn with our perilous voyage, and may haste
To execute those counsels, which our thoughts

He spoke; and instantly the willing host V. 1025—1053
Impatient bids prepare: they as contriv'd,
(Each singly round himself) collective roll
Thunders, and pitchy clouds, and smoky fires.
Then crowded in close mass, all quick become
Invisible to sight, as if to air
Melted away, and opposite man's earth
As use had taught, forward expert they point
Their culminating van: as when a ship
The sole Manilla charg'd with all the wealth
Of Eastern Ind tow'rd Acapulco turns
From throng'd Phillippine Isles and China's coasts
Her long and trackless voyage, purposing
Over the vast Pacific, cross'd in space
Waters engirding half this terrene globe,
To draw her treasur'd stores and safe unfold
In other waiting worlds her thousand gems
Rubies and sapphires, opal and the shine
Of emeralds, Persia's silks and gold, and spoil
Of wasted kingdoms and imperial thrones.
All waiting for their dreadless course, at once
Give their fierce whirlwinds way, which instant drive
Forward, ungovern'd, in a moment, blown
Swifter than light'ning, all th' embody'd mass
Thro' space unmeasurable, past the worlds
Of universal nature, and the realms
Of wide creation. Conscious tumult told
Of some disorder'd fury, fled along,

In its own wild, unfathom'd darkness hid
Millions of leagues, ere yet th' infernal host
On their mysterious transit driv'n, had pass'd
With speed so unconceiv'd, that even now
Hurl'd headlong 'mid the ocean of earth's globe
Dashing they fall. Instant high-surging waves,
Arch'd from the lowmost depths, within their wombs
Raging receive them. Buried all awhile
Remain, o'erpower'd with hard fatigue, and lie
Strown on the mighty waters' channel'd base:
All safe alike, for sudden now they rise
Wrapt in their clouds, and seizing to themselves
The loosen'd hurricanes, behold! the sea
Drops down, appeas'd. Their forms they now assume
Rejoicing in their safety and their flight
Deem'd unobserv'd, under the conduct high
Of their proud King, whom now his legion hails
Congratulant, as o'er the lowmost beds
Of the unsounded sea they walk erect,
And gaze, above, around, the pathless mass
Of azure waters, where so low, all seem'd
Silent and peaceful-mild, nor the broke roar
Of falling wave could reach the tranced ear.
As the high billows settled to a calm,
Magnificent appear'd the solemn scene,
As when at silent evening hour of peace
The pensive eye of Meditation marks
With reverential awe the dome of heav'n
Deck'd o'er its blue serene with thousand fires,
Emptying their golden lamps of dewy light,

V. 1054—1083

Streaming-unbounded, while the white clouds float
In lucid beauty thro' th' expansive sky.
'Twas now man's night, and on the surface green
The full-orb'd moon oblique her quivering beams
Shot bright, each spangled wave robing in gold,
Where stars innumerable trembling shone
Reflected. O'er the wide translucent deep
Ships glitt'ring far, as on the crystal top
They wing'd with bended sails their shadowy way,
Mov'd, swan-like, to th' observant ken of Spirits,
Who on the watch at so unwonted scene
Felt an extatic glow of strange delight.
Anxious they gaze, if mid the vasty waves
Land within sight appear. Yet none they view.

So on they pass thro' many an arching cave
Of chrystal pure, or sparry rock, and groves
Of orient pearl, and coral grots, o'erhung
With thousand varied shells, glitt'ring of hues
Changeful in beam, and strown with natural grace
Unwitness'd: while around wild arbours crept
Beauteous sea-shrubs, and flow'rs of forms and dyes
Fresher and fairer than the costly gems
Earth's gardens yield. Wide o'er the radiant floor
By thousands lay unheeded jewels rich
That thro' cerulean waters shot their rays
Of colour'd light. Around, delighted trains
Of gliding fishes, streak'd with every tint
Heav'n's arch displays, reflected to the moon
Playful, quick golden gleams, and wond'ring eyed

The stranger wand'rers. They intent rov'd on,
Nor land discern'd, till some advent'rous Spirit
Gradual-ascending, soon attain'd at will
The surface of the sea, when lifting high
Half of his bulk, he stationary gaz'd
Eager around, and wide; far as the ken
Of his keen-piercing eye explor'd. Ere long
Joyful he deem'd the moon's wan glimmering rays
Discover'd, distant far, white-glittering cliffs.
Instant descending, he disperses round
The welcome tidings, which proud Satan heard
Delighted, for he knew those shining cliffs
Spoke Albion's isle. That way they turn in haste,
Exulting: and along the sea's low beach
Half-flying, treading half, full soon they mark
Upswelling from the bottom, chalky rocks.
Tow'rd these they glad approach, and pleas'd behold
Wave-worn, supported, hollow-arching caves,
Rang'd various underneath on columns high.
Entering within whose shades, they here dispose
Vast stores of arms, incorruptible now
Of moist or dry, and cumulate involv'd
Huge pitchy clouds, which as a cloke they bare,
Thundérs, and fires, and smoke, and embryo storms,
Tumultuous urg'd along, there safe to lie
Unseen, unknown, till prompt occasion call:
Then backward turning their enliven'd steps
Close to the wall of those deep-piled rocks,
At signal due, all in array ascend,
A shadowy legion fierce, until arriv'd

The ocean-surface and to open view
Of beamy light, invisible to eye
All instant turn, their grosser forms withdrawn,
And firm corporeal to ætherial chang'd.

So thro' th' aërial void they urge their way
Impetuous, unperceiv'd, till their vast train
Approach in silent shade the murm'ring vales
And tented plains of Exham. Far above
Conceal'd in rolling mists that from the waves
Rose of deep-flowing Ex, their glance discerns
Th' infernal pow'rs on some obscure consult
Assembled. Now their mighty pristine shapes
Assum'd, the host Satanic under guide
Of their proud Emperor in warlike parade
Tow'rd their compeers advanc'd. Dire was the noise
And tumult of fierce joy, that from each host
Burst at the sight of other: chief from those
By Satan left, now to behold their King
Return'd with multitudinous array
Of pow'rful legions destin'd to become
Their glad associates in dark deeds of guile
And future war. High gratulation loud
Salutes with solemn hail th' Infernal Chief,
To whose exact enquiry prompt reply
Tells that th' opposing human armies rest
Yet separate, as when he parted late
On his proud enterprize: both under guard
Vigilant of empyreal pow'rs, alike
Adverse. When eager thus the Prince of Hell.

" Now therefore is our time, while we to earth
Return'd with great and wisest pow'rs remain
Yet undiscover'd, thro' th' exulting Danes
Fury ungovernable and desire
Frantic for battle to inspire, till all
The host triumphant, issuing from the camp,
Spread havoc and destruction far around
O'er populous plains and towns with sword and fire
In numbers irresistible. Perhaps
Thus they may tempt the English pow'rs to meet
In adverse battle, ere as yet the chiefs
Return with banded aids, so sure to yield
Victory uncontroll'd, while we aloft
Visible like the Pagan Gods, attend
Our vot'ries' deeds and prompt assist their pray'rs,
Exciting confidence and fiery zeal
As yet unknown in frenzy as effect."

His spirits applaud: and thro' the waning night
Satan to all his host untir'd imparts
Secret instruction, big with fraud and death,
Till ere the unmask'd dawn thro' earliest dews
Serenely cadent over hill and vale
Had pour'd her coral light, th' ætherial pow'rs
Malevolent amid the Danish camp
Had scatter'd wildly-baneful thoughts, and sleep
Disturb'd with dreams of blood. Now the thron'd sun
Sprung from the sea in panoply of gold
Ascended heav'n, diffusing gem-bright beams.
The wicked throng of Spirits, scatter'd round

The Danish camp in silent due array
Await the rising of the Pagan host
To their wont matin orisons. Full soon
Forth issue from the tents innumerous throngs,
Warriors in brilliant arms, and haughty chiefs
Magnific-deck'd, standards, and sacred bards,
Under their well-known orders marshall'd soon,
And snow-white prophetesses, matron dames
And youths and graceful virgins, met as us'd
In vast assemblage their due rites to pay
Of solemn adoration to Heav'n's King.

Bards sweet-attune their holy melodies.
Harps mingling swell responsive strains. The hosts
Fervent, extatic join, and raise devout
The universal hand and ardent eye
Tow'rd heav'n, adoring.
When behold!—amid
Th' irradiate sky, by swift degrees display'd,
Glory and light as of a thousand suns
Burst thro' the blue meridian vault, and soon
Aloft, in sight of all, thro' brilliant clouds
On each hand parting from the splendid frame,
Descended smooth a mighty chariot, roll'd
Magnific as of gold or living fire.
Its gorgeous wheels, flashing purpureal rays,
Uprais'd on high a concave blazing dome,
Within whose vast recess, sublime-enthron'd
Sat a majestic shape, conspicuous; cloth'd
As in empyreal armour, and his brows

Girt with a tow'ring crown, celestial-bright.
Awful he sat, nor seem'd in pow'r and state
Less than a God, as with almighty arm
He rein'd the furious Tygers, whose huge forms
Floating terrific thro' the radiant air
Drew his resplendent pomp. Beside him hung
His dazzling shield stupendous, and in range
Of trophied grandeur countless lances shone,
While his right-arm upheld a flamy spear
High-eminent, which as a signal beam'd
To thousand shapes of lineament divine
Who in refulgent train attendant mov'd
After th' imperial car. Most goddess-like,
All arm'd, and mounted chief on winged steeds;
Some in pedestrian grace sailing along
Th' illumin'd heav'n.
The Pagan hosts,—aghast,—
In admiration rapt,—astonish'd,—know
Th' Almighty King of Gods, deign'd to descend
Ev'n from Valhalla's glorious domes with these
His Goddess train of Valkyries.—Strait all
Exulting with a cry of mix'd acclaim
Shout universal, "Odin, Odin, come
With heav'nly apparition from his halls
Of joy." In prostrate awe all fall devout
Prone to the earth.
Lower the glorious car
Descends, and as it moves, a floating shade
Spreads o'er the dazzled earth, of verd'rous land
Covering a furlong space, until it hung

Curb'd by degrees in stationary poise
Above the kneeling host. Th' adoring bards
Scarce dare gaze upward in amaze, and strike
Symphonious harps, and sing in holy strain
Hymns of glad praise. Th' Almighty throned shape,
Supreme-uprising from his orient seat,
Forth stretches vast his glitt'ring spear, and waves
Its massy frame, beck'ning to all the host
As if with invitation to ascend;
Then, sternly fixing his tempestuous brows,
Points with infuriate gesture and fierce rage
Where lie contiguous cities, or wide towns,
Peopled with native habitants: and strikes
With unconceived blow the flamy range
Of his commingling lances, that all heav'n
Resounds with sudden noise, to dire astound
Swell'd, as his rais'd, ungovernable arm
Rings on his adamantine shield the din
Of deepest battle.
Mute astonishment
Seiz'd all th' imploring army, and behold!
The mighty Raven, where it stood aloft
Conspicuous floating 'mid the silky folds
Of the fate-hallow'd standard, sudden rear'd
His sable wings on high, instinct with life
And joy, triumphant; presage of success,
And glorious victory.
Now a vapourous cloud
O'er the mid heav'n rolling its darken'd train,
From the reluctant eyes in raptur'd awe

Fix'd fervent, gradual-veil'd the splendid pomp,
Soft-evanescent, till at length the sky
Fades to its wont blue aspect. Scarce had thus
Parted the radiant vision, ere the Danes
Enthusiastic fury seiz'd. They start
Sudden, and madd'ning strike their sonant shields
With quiv'ring spears. Fierce acclamation loud
Ascends to heav'n, in long-commingling cries
Of "Slaughter, slaughter, battle, instant war.
"Odin invites us—Heav'n's Almighty King,
"Visible now to each astonish'd eye,
"Gives signal plain of battle. Let us hence
"Instantly to assail unravag'd towns,
"Temples, and provinces with sword and fire,
"Or ev'n the English camp, whither the God
"Pointed. Oh! never, never will we bear
"Ignoble peace.—We and our sons unborn
"Will with blood-reeking arms thro' many an age
"Exterminate the Christians, and ascend
"From fields of gore to heav'n's all-splendid halls.
"Odin will share with us feasts, sports, and wars."

Wildly they leap for joy; such ardor breath'd
The desp'rate host, and thro' th' enraged ranks
Such uncontroll'd impatience fir'd their souls.
Some deem, that in a body all the host
Should storm with pow'r conjunct the English camp
Instant, of ample devastation thus
And final victory sure. This counsel aids
Fierce Oskital. But Guthrun, Sov'reign King,

Dissuades, and to the public mind recalls
The former high resolve t' await reserv'd
Fresh fields of honourable fame, where Death
Shall claim from paths of noblest danger souls
Of mightiest warriors. Rather he approves
That all in bands diverse forth-issuing pour
O'er the surrounding country, and enjoy
Battles on ev'ry hand, where'er the foe
Embodied may oppose (for so, he deems,
Appear'd the God's high will) and conquer towns
And plains as yet unvisited, until
Advancing in full pow'r the English host
Return to glorious fields of hard contest.

Obeisant to his words, ere yet the sun
Rode in his noon, innumerous squadrons fierce
Rush o'er contiguous plains. Before them strode
Ruin with giant-step, as o'er the land
They bear mad desolation, havoc, spoil,
Insatiable, and with impious fires
Sack each devoted temple's holy rest,
Or rising villages, or peopled towns,
Drenching with slaughter their blood-purpled swords.
Borne o'er the various provinces, they pour
Resistless, till th' alarmed country, lost
In fearful expectation, shudd'ring moans
Inevitable doom of final death.
So on they roam, till all the land presents
One dire tumultuous scene, confusion link'd
With massacre, and near the confines come,

Insolent, of the shatter'd English camp.
There madd'ning they aspire by fiercest acts
Of wanton devastation to allure.
Alfred with all his rous'd indignant pow'rs
Battles yet premature to tempt and waste
His scarce-recover'd strength; where wide-entrench'd
Pond'ring designs of import vast, he lay
Awaiting when his chiefs with summon'd aids
Should to his camp return, and full employ'd
That interval of time with busiest works.

These provocations and insulting arts,
And universal havoc raging round,
Th' angelic pow'rs observ'd, nor idle view'd,
Or void of meet surprize. Alarm'd, their thoughts,
Endued with spiritual penetration, strait
Suspect Satanic subtleties and wiles,
Effecting operations pow'rful more
Than wont: and instant image Hell's proud King
Now lab'ring furiously to execute
His horrid threats, late-utter'd. On the watch
Alert, invisible to sight, dispers'd
Various around, they mark infernal crafts,
Perform'd mysterious. In amaze they see
To fervent pray'rs of the deluded Danes
Imploring heav'nly armour, thro' the air
Amid deep thunders or pale fires, huge shields
Or blood-stain'd swords down-hurl'd by awful shapes
Illusive, habited as mightiest Gods,
Or Demigods, innumerous:—Or in shades

Of hideous darkness by the yawning mouths
Of solitary dens, untrod by men,
Sounds utter words oracular, of import
Terrific, big with prophecy and deeds
Of hideous mention, to the greedy ears
Secret-deliver'd of th' enquiring brave.—
Or ghosts of long-departed chiefs arise
From their oped graves in battle-fields at breath
Of charmed Runic rhymes.—That soon the ken
Intelligent of angel sense perceives
Legions of spirits newly drawn from hell
In league of subtlest machination join'd
T' inspire with hellish fury, and delude
The wretched Pagans to enthusiasm wild
And solemn trust in these their fancied Gods.

V. 1378—1406

Delib'rate, in himself collected, soon
Michael, empyreal leader, deep-revolves
The meditated mischief, and events
Ponders, that consequential may induce
Dangers inevitable near. Unsafe
He deems the fate of empire to confide
And threaten'd stablishment of Christ's all-pure
And heav'nly faith thro' Britain's favor'd isle,
(Perhaps from her example high, to win
Secure foundation o'er the farthest realms
Of this terraqueous globe) unsafe he deems
So great, and weighty charge in guard to trust
Of his own fewer pow'rs: before scarce meet
Or equal 'gainst so fierce, infernal foes;

Now utterly unmatch'd. All vain he deems
T' oppose their proud augmented force. Behold!
Prescient of future, th' archangelic pow'r
By dread, mysterious signal swift convokes
His conscious hierarchies.—Round their chief
Summon'd they throng, by orders and degrees
Thron'd regular, with heav'nly glories crown'd;
To whom, in gorgeous majesty array'd,
Their godlike King.

"Astonish'd, we behold
Satan with pow'rs innumerable arm'd
Of subject spirits, new-conven'd, whose dark
Malignant fury and consummate guile
Aim now to execute those haughty boasts
Menac'd by Hell's fierce King. Their horrid rage,
Too eager, has surpass'd its own intent.
We are aware;—by skill we have discern'd
The dangers we have 'scap'd; else might have met
Incautious. Now our numbers we confess
Unequal to oppose in hostile range
All hell, convok'd to war: or trust our charge
Magnific, to our disproportion'd aid.
Behoves us instant, new and meet allies
To ask of angels from th' empyreal courts
Of highest heav'n, whose union may support
Our else o'erpow'red strength. Wherefore my firm
Unalter'd purpose rests from these confines
Of earth, with some selected train, to part
Immediate to our native heav'n, and there
Call mightiest aids of high, celestial thrones

To join our glorious work: prompt all to yield
Assistance in the cause of God, his Christ,
And injur'd man, by Demon-arts assail'd.
Departing thus, the remnant of my pow'rs
I leave in charge of this afflicted isle.
Your constant care be her defensive host
And her unequall'd King: on whom alone
Depend Britannia's safety, peace, and weal
Thro' many a future age. Her sons unborn
To these must look for happiness; shall call
These men deliv'rers, fathers, guardian-shields.
Wherefore attend my strict command. Prevent,
By ev'ry care most vigilant, the march
Of Alfred's host, imperfect yet, but soon
To feel increase of multitudinous aids
Summon'd from distant plains, till ye behold
Me from the states of heav'n return'd sublime
With mighty pow'rs of radiant demigods.
Not sooner will the Danish host assail
The Christian camp, but wait (so wills their chief
Of nobler nature) the full-arm'd approach
Of all the native legions, for array
Of num'rous war in fair-contested fields
Glorious and open. Only if ye yield
Satan by wily insults all too soon
Forth to elude the English host, and tempt
Certain destruction in inferior fight,
Will he effuse his dreadful-brooded ire,
Effectively, and whelm our rising state
In final ruin. Wherefore act, forewarn'd."

He spoke; and instant loud applause reveal'd
Glad approbation. Strait the mighty Chief
From mid the splendid throng selective calls
A glorious band, who in imperial train
Shall to celestial realms of bliss escort
His airy voyage. They sublime ascend
Attendant chariots in compact array
Spontaneous moving, which on wings of gold
Stretch'd o'er harmonious-rolling wheels advance
Smooth thro' the beamy sky, and rapid waft
Their skilful guides, beyond the cloudy sphere
Of this terraqueous globe, beyond the space
Of universal nature, passing stars
Or suns innumerous, which to other worlds,
Various as infinite, dispens'd their beams;
Peopled, perhaps, with varying habitants
By all-creative wisdom to each clime
Accommodated; till the gorgeous pomp
Arrive in state of solemn majesty
The glittering borders of the heav'n of heav'ns.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK VI.

The angels arriving in heaven pass first through the rural or more sequestered parts of it, then through the populous and more inhabited regions, whose delights and glories are pictured to the fancy. Michael comes into his own empire, where he is met by the orders of angels subject to his command. He ascends his throne, and explains the cause of his arrival, which is to lead back with him to earth a new band of select spirits to be employed against Satan in the defence of the Christians, but declares that it is first necessary to have the permission of the Deity. To intreat which, Michael and his powers approach the throne of the Supreme Deity, of which a faint developement is endeavoured to be conveyed to human imagination. The permission of the Deity is granted. Adoration and praise of the Supreme. Michael and a selected legion prepare to return to earth. They pass through various spheres of the created universe, till they at length enter that planetary system, within which man's earth moves. They see on their way the several other planets within this sphere, according to our ideas of astronomy. At length perceiving the earth with her attendant moon, they stop awhile on the hills of the satellite, where being struck with admiration at the extent and grandeur of their journey and the prospects they have seen, Michael breaks out into a rapture of astonishment at the Omnipotence and goodness of the Deity. They then descend to earth, and joining their other powers, enter the camp of the English.

ALFRED.

BOOK VI.

V. 1—18.

CELESTIAL pow'r, thou who canst give the soul,
Borne on Imagination's ardent wings,
Herself creating, to behold display'd
Visions of glory passing earthly thought,
Deign o'er thy vot'ry to effuse thy beams
Of purest light: guide my unused steps,
Approaching with a meek religious awe;
Protect mine eyes from sight, my tongue from speech,
Of aught profane for human utterance,
While I presume th' empyreal realms of bliss
To pierce, and ope the secrets of high heav'n.

Now had the glorious embassy, beyond
The farthest verge of this round universe,
Arriv'd the lucent wall, whose opal tow'rs,
Beaming as suns, with dazzling radiance bound
Heav'n's everlasting regions. Whence in full
Stupendous prospect lay th' unclouded view
Of all creation, with innum'rous worlds

Fill'd, that in ever-intervolving spheres
Mov'd various, and proclaim'd the pow'r divine
Which gave them being and their place ordain'd.
On these so lately past, th' angelic train,
Checking their swifter voyage, gaze awhile
With looks of grateful joy and mix'd amaze,
Ere thro' the loftily refulgent gates
That tow'rd the Eastern courts celestial led,
Their bright procession rode.
Ent'ring they view
The mansions of the blest: the chosen seats
Of mighty Hierarchies, orders bright,
Angels, Archangels, Cherubs, Seraphim,
Thousands of thousand heav'nly hosts, dispers'd
Thro' radiant climes of infinite extent,
Illum'd with glory and transcendent shine
Of vision beatific, that dispens'd
To highest sense of angels perfect joy,
All light, all purity, all happiness.
Here met in lavishest profusion each
Entrancing bliss, (yet far more excellent)
Which in Arcadian or Elysian fields
Poetic harps have feign'd. No eye hath seen,
No ear hath heard, nor human heart conceiv'd
The rapt'rous joys in never-failing spring
Abundant here. Calm now the fervid orbs
Of the refulgent chariots in array
Melodious roll along heav'n's crystal floor
Which as a sea of gems or liquid gold,
Mingling with changeful splendour, soft, serene,
Shone from afar, where the delighted eye

Repos'd not long, but gently wander'd o'er
Allur'd to boundless distance, or reclin'd
On many a gradual swell and winding fall.

Thus as the train magnific on its way
Approaching tow'rd the throne of Deity
Conspicuous mov'd, its pomp accompanied
Full many a band celestial; shapes divine,
Of beauty inexpressible, adorn'd
In robes of glorious texture, and their brows
Circled with crowns of gold. On orient wings
Glittering with richest hues, serene they sail
Along the air, as varying fancy leads;
Sometimes precursive on the clear expanse
Of the crystalline pavement, they proclaim
The coming state. Sometimes with playful flight
The splendid equipage ascends on high,
Whence lay in prospect all th' extended scene
Below; the regions of empyreal heav'n,
Of rural view or populous.
Around
Nearest they mark a champain-tract diffus'd,
Delectable to sight, nor wanting change
Diversified of hill, and vale, and plain.
Soft-sloping hills with dewy verdure clad,
Enrich'd with fragrant flow'rs, whose splendor shone
As vegetable gems. Calm overspread
The shadowy-chequer'd woods, on vital trees
Profus'd ambrosial fruits, breathing of youth,
Purpureal-beaming thro' the wavy leaves,

Nectareous, grateful to th' unsated taste,
The food of angels. These contiguous fann'd
Inviting bow'rs of bliss, seats of delight,
That redolent afar the genial air
Scented with joy and dalliance, as they hung
Crowning with graceful canopy the beds
Of holy vales, where Solitude serene
Dwelt with Tranquillity. Less soothing far
Odorous breezes o'er Iberian vales
Blow, thro' thick myrtle groves and orange bow'rs,
Where the fond lover, hid in Solitude,
(So feigns romance) under some arching grot
Tells to the woods and streams his ardent love,
In languid music from his sighing flute,
Echoed around, till sweetest airs and sounds
Lull his enraptur'd sense to dreamy sleep.
Throughout these matchless scenes, celestial light
Impearl'd the glittering dew, o'er banks and dales
Luxuriant shed, which with its cool veil deck'd
Spring ever-nascent, and with balmy juice
Foster'd unpictur'd beauty. Fragrant less,
Less fair past mention, shines the blushing rose,
When to th' admiring eye at beamy noon
Enthron'd in leaves amid her budding train
Coy she half-opes her velvet globe, and sheds
Wide thro' the conscious air and sentient shrubs
Purpureal grace and fragrance. Thro' each vale
Meand'ring ran rivers of happiness,
Fed by fresh fountains of perpetual life,
That silvery-winding shew'd their sparkling waves

As pearls, reflected in the beams of heav'n,
While as they murm'ring roll'd on lustrous gems,
Music pursued their wand'ring, and delight
Waited their gentle fall, ere underneath
Some silent grot diffus'd, their gurgling lapse
Retir'd embosom'd. Oft in such recess
Veil'd amid shades of peace, in blissful ease,
Angels repos'd, and tun'd melodious lays
In secret, to extatic hymns of joy,
Which to the waiting echo soft-betray'd
Their sweet-redoubled cadence, and diffus'd
From grot to grot, responsive borne away
Their tender burden. Oft amid these scenes
Wafting their airy course, angelic forms
Delay'd their speed and hov'ring in delight
Listen'd the rapt'rous strains which floating rose
Amid the gentle air, unconscious whence
Issued th' enchanting melodies. Around,
Birds in consorted quires their numerous song
Warbling attun'd, which thro' the vivid groves
Zephyrs on whispering pinions gently breath'd
To purling waterfalls, that dashing wav'd
Refreshing coolness with harmonious sound.
Less grateful-mild (with earthly scene compar'd)
Streams the fresh influence of the ev'ning breeze
Breath'd o'er the landscape, while the sinking sun
Purples the west and thro' the vocal air
Scatters his rosy beams, what time the herds
Homeward retiring o'er the dewy ground
Responsive low, and on the gilded trees

Stiller, the birds sit calm, warbling aloud
A farewell concert to departing day.
The varied plains in faint-receding hues
Soften'd to tender distance, and display'd
Verdure and grateful radiance, more serene
Than light of gems, with lustre than the moon
More rich, when sailing thro' the starry heav'n,
Full-orb'd, she paints the earth with fluid gold.
Lakes in their crystal bosoms wide around
Reflected heaven's gorgeous firmament,
Magnific, of cerulean tint, with gems
Set as with stars, and thousand glories, pure
As living suns, beaming celestial day.
Amid whose splendid dome smooth-floating clouds,
Wreath'd from the fumes of incense, nard, or myrrh
With lofty hand from golden censers thrown
By angel choirs, or odours borne on high
From ever-burning altars, scatter'd down
Varying reflections o'er heav'n's pearly floor
And emerald seas, still-changing as beheld,
Calm-evanescent. Whether purple morn
Bade from their silvery breasts ambrosial dews
Meekly descend, or to their soft embrace
Eve, graceful-sailing in her modest car,
Yielded resplendent light, and bade them veil
Heav'n's glories in soft shade, while she induc'd
Delicious twilight o'er expecting realms,
Mother of contemplation and the bliss
Of pensive seriousness, yet ting'd with gold
And purple radiance their fair-streaming robes.

Seasons less genial deck'd the joyous earth
When Sol with Venus in the Rhodian isle
Slept, while the gratulant heav'ns rain'd drops of gold, V. 168—197.
And over hill and dale each fragrant flow'r
Grateful of orient hue spontaneous bloom'd.
Sometimes reflected from innumerous thrones,
Ere day declines, aërial glories burst
Proud on the ravish'd gaze, illustrious-rear'd
As rainbows, glowing in magnific range
With many a colour'd arch, expansive-stretch'd
Triumphal o'er mid heav'n, thro', whose bright pomp
Angels in glitt'ring chariots pass sublime
In long array of princely pageantry
At solemn festivals, while in their looks
Shines immortality, their argent robes
Pretext with golden reeds, ensigns of state.
Thus they behold the rich effulgence mild
Recede, admiring; then thro' other climes
Delight to wander, eager to survey
Heav'n's beauteous wonders, lavishly dispers'd
Exhaustless: such as human language fails
To picture by a name. Beyond compare
Luxuriant less, nor so profuse of bliss
Smile the glad regions and balm-dropping groves
Of Araby the blest, where verd'rous vales
Teeming with fruits from ev'ry country met
Cool court the willing feet, and fragrant gales
Smelling of cassia, aloes, nard, and balm
Possess the melting sense. Then smit with love
And grateful adoration, they converse

Of God's eternal goodness and new hymns
Frame to his praise. Some ev'n beyond the bounds
Of heav'n delight new knowledge to acquire
And pierce the secrets of the universe
Which thence in prospect lies. Oft on bold wing
From the celestial verge they shoot away
Amid the rolling worlds and endless suns
Till hov'ring near their various orbs, they mark
Their motions, laws, spheres, shapes, and habitants.
Then back to heav'n they speed, lost in amaze
At God's omnipotence: or frequent-charg'd
With solemn embassy from pow'r Supreme
Their voyage thro' immeasurable space
They steer on wing, and execute with joy
Divine behests.

Thus pass'd the new-arriv'd
Rapt in serene delight, thro' various climes
Of rural countries, till their steps approach
Regions, by populous multitudes possess'd,
That shew'd as cities, and to view display'd
Magnificence and glories save in heav'n
Seen never. Seats of sov'reign majesty,
Where thro' extensive empires mightiest pow'rs
Of archangelic Seraphs held their state
And regal dignities: dominion high
Kingdoms and principalities display'd
With pomp unutterable: imperial tow'rs
Blazing with riches, thick as stars, allur'd
On ev'ry hand th' astonish'd gaze, high-rais'd
Where palaces innumerable shone,

Cherubic domiciles, with all delight
Replete, that with sublime effulgence wide
Conspicuous flam'd, as here were center'd sole
All honour, glory, splendor, and renown.
Thro' gates of beaten gold, whose massy frame
At frequent even distance parts the walls
Of polish'd alabaster, which surround
These sumptuous regions, the resplendent throng
Pass in procession vast, and aw'd survey
The gorgeous structures, mansions which they knew
Not distant from the throne of Deity.
For could not glories such as these, tho' known,
Rest ev'n of angels unadmir'd. Around
Innumerable, infinite, exact,
Pillars of jasper, beaming living flame,
Each variously inwreath'd with gems, and flow'rs
Celestial, wrought in gold, uprear'd on high
Proud-swelling domes, whose dazzling roofs combin'd
Radiance and grace surpassing thought. These vied
(Tho' changeful admiration check'd compare)
With unprofaned temples, raised sublime
By boundless pow'r, of purest chrysolite
Transparent chief, where thousand sapphires blaz'd
With azure light, and rubies, morning-ray'd,
Mingled their shine with purple amethyst,
Sardine, or opal, iris-hued.

Less bright
Or soothing glows mild Eve's Hesperian throne
Calmly descending, while the painted skies
In clouds array'd of crimson, purple, and gold

V. 228—257.

Glitter afar, and o'er the landscape shed
A Tyrian light, soften'd by falling dews.
Within th' apartments of these splendid frames
Stately pilasters of empyreal gold
Rose, while the pomp of precious woods around
Commingling lavish ornament, with scent
Of odorous cedar, myrtle groves, or palm,
Supported cielings of unrivall'd view:
Sculptur'd with emblems and devices rare,
Where richest metals ductile took all shapes,
Or heav'nly pencils, dipp'd in hues divine,
Display'd all fancy's favor'd lineaments,
In prodigality of art. Here oft
Angelic orders underneath the shade
Of trophied banners hierarchal met,
Gorgeous-array'd, their starry-glittering wings
Emergent from beneath purpureal robes
Or vests of purest white, distinguish'd all
By diadems and crowns, and in their hands
Illustrious sceptres borne with modest grace.
Innumerable met; in numbers more,
In splendor richer, than the rays of morn
Shot o'er the world by Phœbus, when he leaves
The ocean-chambers, and ascending fires
With undiminish'd pow'r the earth and skies,
And decks each green sea-wave in golden light.
Thro' lofty porches and vast-arching halls
Moves thus the bright assemblage, passing bow'rs
Of silv'ry texture, workmanship divine,
Where art-rais'd fountains spouting liquid gold

Play'd various, till their solemn steps arrive
Refulgent altars on the brilliant floor,
Mosaic-wrought, beset, with blossoms pure
And spotless lilies hung, on whose chaste top
Frankincense fum'd, and heav'nly odours breath'd
Ineffable delight. Awhile they send
Their fragrant off'rings, graceful here dispos'd:
Then for sublimer festival prepare;
And high-ascending steps of amber clear
Or pure jacynct, with regal air they mount
Thrones of inestimably glorious state,
Emblazon'd o'er with sumptuous turrets, rais'd
'Mid sight-distracting splendor.
Seated soon
Accordant all their solemn harmony
Triumphantly begin, and joyful raise
Unisonant their choral extacies,
Innumerous-voic'd, to thousand dulcet strings
Responsive sweet, with living melody
Awake, and tun'd to tender-breathing flutes,
Or deep sonorous air of organ-tubes.
Loud halleluias and hosannas rose
Resounding thro' mid heav'n, while they extol
In swelling strains re-iterate the praise
Of their ALMIGHTY MAKER, and advance
HIS goodness, pow'r, HIS wisdom infinite;
HIS glory, truth, HIS majesty supreme:
Immortal essence, universal King,
HE sole dominion pre-existent held
Before all worlds; HE all created things

Made for HIS pleasure: thro' eternal time
HE reigns omnipotent, dispensing joy
And peace, and bliss, boundless, and without end.

Thus sang th' angelic choirs, whose dwellings pass'd,
Th' archangel chief his following train conducts
Tow'rd his own honour'd empire, soon perceiv'd;
Known by innumerable blazing spires,
Signal of wealth and pomp inimitable.
'Mid which arriv'd thro' lofty portals wide
Flaming of burnish'd agate, they behold
Splendor ineffable and matchless grace,
Whose soul-entrancing vision in amaze
Usurps th' unsettled eye. Superbest fanes
Of hyacinthine beam, aloft adorn'd
With tow'red pinnacles, and mighty domes
Of lustrous gold, inlaid with starry gems,
Allur'd on ev'ry hand the ravish'd gaze.
While vast pavilions, the consign'd abodes
Of radiant demigods, magnific rear'd
Their deathless glories. Not Persepolis,
Queen of the richest East, renown'd of old,
Shone so illustrious in her height of pow'r,
When, the vast Babylonian empire won,
Media and Persia their dominions join'd,
And mightiest Potentates adoring brought
Their costly gifts, and swell'd her royal state.

Now issuing from their lofty seats, appear'd
Innumerable hosts of glorious spir'ts,

Intent with rev'rence due in bright array
To meet their Sov'reign, known return'd: high chiefs
Of his imperial realm, illustrious states,
And potent hierarchs, than eastern Kings
Richer-adorn'd, when on some solemn day
Or of inauguration, or wont rites
Of Gods, in costliest pearls adorn'd and gold
Turban, and flowing silk, they pass superb
Thro' their metropolis, while nobles crowd
The vast procession to resplendent mosques
And high pagodas, whose proud minarets
And glist'ring domes the sun at beamy noon
Scarce emulates, but gilds with ling'ring ray.

V. 346—374.

These deck'd in golden zones and in their hands
Palms ever-florent, while unfading youth
Various in glory mark'd their spotless mien
With acclamation loud receive th' approach
Of their high Monarch, and desirous all
To hear his purpos'd pleasure, lead direct
Tow'rd his own great pavilion, their glad steps
Responsive falling to the rapt'rous sound
Of thousand lyres, clarions, and vocal flutes
Which wide the tide of music roll'd o'er heav'n.
Full soon the joyous multitude arrive
The structur'd palace, where effulgence blaz'd
Incomparable, and exalted spoke
Monarchal sov'reignty, and mightiest pow'r.
Arrang'd in gorgeous majesty, it stood
Tow'ring of brilliant jasper, or of bright

Marble, excelling all of Paphian frame
Or fam'd Palmyra's boasted monuments.
Less haughty that Ephesian temple shone
Rais'd to Diana, whose magnific pomp
Kings joy'd to rear, while in the splendid work
All Asia toil'd for ages, proud to found
The beaming glory of th' astonish'd world.
Nor the vast palace of the Median King,
Great Cyrus, equall'd this, tho' all its frame
On ev'ry side with living lustre glow'd,
And prodigal art throughout the pillar'd mass
Cemented richest gems with fluid gold.
Now the supreme procession in array
Of throng'd extent within its ample domes
And vast-o'ershadowing halls their pow'rs dispose,
While their great Emperor with his countless train
Leads solemn thro' the midst his open'd way;
Nor stays, ere he with kingly step ascends
His throne of blazing porphyry, afar
Flaming with light too radiant to behold.
Might seem that here Pactolus had effus'd
The total treasures of his native gold;
Or all Golconda's gems, and miny stores
Of rich Potosi, in this spot were met:
So glorious shone that wond'rous frame beyond
The stretch of mortal thought. For not to sight
Irradiate thus, the Indian boiga spreads
Under the palm or cedar's wavy shade
His many-colour'd scales, while as he moves
Dances a dazzling chain of emeralds, knit

With rubies, sapphires, and the golden blaze
Of topaz, emulous of ev'ning's beams,
Each ever-varying to the ravish'd eye.

Around its royal wealth depended low
Falling in graceful folds, a tissue fair
Wrought by angelic hands in social hours
Of happy ease: and from the dome-swell'd roof
A wide, transparent, circling interval
Threw on the beatific scene a flood
Of heav'nly rays. Amid this matchless pomp
Rose Michael, sov'reign hierarch, whose throne
Subjects so many and so glorious held.
Dignity in his port, and on his brows
Sat puissance and imperial state, yet blent
With mildest look, where universal love
Shone, and benevolence. His bright aspect
Might seem the morning sun, when seated high
Amid his saffron chariot he prepares
To cross the blue-arch'd sky, with floods of light
To cheer and renovate th' expecting world.
Soon his magnific sceptre high-upheld,
The godlike pow'r his mighty purpose spoke.

" Empyreal glories, essences divine,
Seraphs, and cherubim, all orders bright,
Listen our meditations, and our will.
Needs must we more admire, the more we know,
God's everlasting goodness, and extol
His wond'rous attributes, who thron'd in bliss

Still in creation joys, and from himself,
Nature's prime fount and cause, unceasing pours
Thro' various worlds of vast infinity
Life unconfin'd and boundless happiness.
He, from eternity all-perfect, pure,
By the sole word of his omnipotence
Spontaneous made what of created being
We e'er behold or know: and sure intends
All things in chain of endless union
Shall sometime blend, and all their pow'rs enlarg'd,
Gradual, shall know each other, and perceive
Him above all SUPREME, till lost in him,
The good shall here enjoy unfading bliss,
And with more worthy praise thro' endless time
Know and adore him, Parent of all good.
Sure not for us alone (that we of all
God's favor'd creatures thus should sole enjoy
Bliss super-eminent) we deem all these
Vernal delights and whatsoe'er can charm
The ravish'd sense with lavish dignity
Created sole; sure not for us entire,
Tho' angels, and in presence of heav'n's King
Exalted to bright thrones, but other hosts
Of creatures now inferior shall be rais'd
These glories to participate, become
Ev'n as ourselves, our equals and compeers,
If worthy found by virtue and desire
To know and execute their Maker's will.
'Mong others, an innumerous race of men
Creatures of heav'n high-favor'd, on their earth

First form'd, when all the universal worlds
Echoed with songs and shout, that it had pleas'd
Omnipotence with fair creations new
The rebel angels' havoc to repair,
Shall hither after death, (doom of their kind,
Forfeit of disobedience) if they live
Virtuous on their short theatre of life,
Ascend, and share with us heav'n's endless joys,
All we perceive around, or e'er may know,
In full fruition. Them th' All-good Supreme
Created happy, in their fleshly mould
Breath'd a divinity, a living soul,
Immortal, of his own bright image part,
That man, created thus, to angels seem'd
Little inferior, and with Deity
Held free and full communion: but th' All-wise
One sole condition to their bliss annex'd,
The pledge of their obedience, that this soul
Should its own dignity and nature high
Cautious maintain, nor fall, debas'd, to serve
The fleshly appetite, as sordid brutes,
Irrational. Yet man, alas! seduc'd
By Satan's tempting guile, forgets his state,
Falls, and incurs the penalty foredoom'd,
Death, and his Maker's alienated ire.
Deity can no more with sinful man
Degraded, fall'n, his once angelic soul
To flesh subservient now, hold as before
Blissful communion, free: but must receive
Atonement of offending flesh, and death,

The threaten'd penalty. The justice else
And truth of God were forfeit, which to hope
Ev'n sin would own impossible. Yet now
Mysterious love divine, from God himself
Pure-emanating, offers to assume
A fleshly substance, and to undergo
Ev'n ignominious death to save a race
Of late so favor'd and so blest, from death
And final ruin, as not falling sole
From their own proper impulse, but seduc'd
By God's fell foe, on ev'l and death intent.
Eternal justice, still rememb'ring mercy,
Accepts the ransom, which at destin'd time,
Predicted, cloth'd in fleshly shape, appears
Benignant, humble, on man's earth: and here
Reveals to men tidings of heav'n, till then
Unknown or disbeliev'd, and tells where lie
The realms of true, unfading happiness.
Not found on earth, tho' studious reason seek
Her there so oft in vain: sole to be won
'Mid these glad regions near the fount of bliss
In future life, immortal, after death
(On each man still impos'd) by habits firm
Of goodness in his transient, earthly life,
The second pledge of his obedience made
To his appeas'd Creator's will. Which full
To qualify each humblest meanest man
To know and strict observe, that gracious Friend,
Come from the fount of truth, deigns to diffuse
Plain, simple rules, with easy force applied

To each man's heart, whose fond observance works
Ev'n upon earth, peace, joy and calm content,
Earnest of future bliss; for these endear
Virtue for its own sake, and with mild sway
Adapt mankind to know and cherish good;
Whence we may hail them for ourselves and heav'n,
Fit nor unworthy Peers, thro' endless time.
This Satan knows, and therefore labours still
Doctrines and hopes so pow'rful to o'erwhelm.
Hence his mad rage, where'er these heav'nly truths
Disseminate o'er earth their cheering light,
Burns unrelenting-fell, to hide and check
Their growing progress, and retain mankind
In the dread paths of evil, wars, and death;
That hence he may secure their hapless race
His subjects, to possess his own dark world.
Now o'er one favor'd kingdom of the earth,
The Queen of Europe's isles, this sacred faith
Diffusive spreads, whose high example soon
To distant regions of the terrene globe
Shall waft these joyful hopes, and in one chain
Social connect the sons of other climes:
While its great Monarch, whose capacious mind
Heav'n has illum'd with science pure, and rays
Diversified of wisest, fairest truth,
Labours unceasing o'er his realm to found
Peace, arts, religion, commerce, orders, laws.
But to oppose these good and high designs
The fiercest pow'r of hell's proud King is brought
And full-exerted. A terrific race

V. 523—552.

Of savage, superstitious, Pagan foes,
Lawless invaders, breathing endless wars,
Are by th' infernal arts of Demon-pow'rs
Inspir'd to dreadful deeds, hideous to name.
And, not with common subtlety content,
Which late we foil'd, the gloomy King of death
Burning with fell revenge, has newly call'd
From the grim climes of darkness num'rous hosts
Of unensampled guile and blackest soul,
Whose most mysterious wiles incite these foes
To trust implicit in feign'd, warlike Gods
And em'lous rage ungovern'd to obtain
Their favor, and heav'n's joys, thro' blood and death;
That such infatuate thirst for ceaseless war
May sure o'erpow'r the Christian host, and whelm
England in final ruin, if our aid
Prevent not. Nor will slender pow'r suffice.
Oppos'd against so num'rous, subtle strength,
The bands angelic, late to earth dispatch'd,
Unequal prove, to wage perpetual war
And meet at ev'ry point such restless foes.
Wherefore to heav'n you find me now return'd
With these accompanying Peers, to tell our state
And bring from these blest climes new-chosen aids.
Of you a brave and noble band select
Shall with our pow'rs return to earth, and join
Our glorious labours in the cause of heav'n
And injur'd man against God's envious foe.
But first occasion needs that we demand
Permission from the High Supreme to add

Your numbers to our present pow'rs, and ask
Humbly his fav'ring blessing on our toils;
So shall our task with surer hope succeed.
Therefore prepare we now with meekest act
Of solemn adoration to approach
The radiant skirts of his eternal throne
Where dwells enshrin'd the present Deity:—
And there with decent awe prefer our pray'rs."

The mighty Hierarch ended, and his voice
Hail'd with their gratulation all the host
Of radiant spirits that around his throne
Triumphant throng'd. Loud roll'd their glad applause
As on some happy festival of joy
Music's full-swelling tide, concordant wak'd
From all sweet instruments with voices join'd,
Harmonious fills the sounding dome of heav'n.

Nor stay'd th' august assemblage, but full soon
Array'd in glorious order they advance
Tow'rd the refulgent region, where aloft
Exalted in mid heav'n supreme resides
All-perfect Deity, and calm approach
In solemn silence the resplendent sea
Of radiant chrystal or of jasper pure
Glowing as fire, whose blazing splendor girt
Th' throne eternal of Omnipotence;
Rais'd inaccessible, from face of which
All heav'n retires and earth, and whatsoe'er
Created being dwells thro' boundless space.

Arriv'd the confines of th' empyreal blaze
Rapt in extatic bliss, surrender'd, all
Feel the full presence of Divinity,
And meekly fall, adoring. For to gaze
Upward presum'd not the most glorious spirit,
But all before their glittering countenance
Alike extended their immac'late wings,
And in sublimest transport lost, receive
The blissful effluence of God's sov'reign throne.—

V. 611—639.

But how that all-transcendent throne, on which
Archangels cannot look, can man describe,
Or human words pourtray to human thought?
God's presence, pure, eternal, increate
Essential light, before whose radiant blaze
The sun is darkness, where in majesty
Incomprehensible he lives enshrin'd
And fills with glories on bright glories rais'd
In still increasing bliss, another heav'n
High 'bove all height, of space interminable
And save of him unknown as unpossess'd:
Whence at one glance his sole Omniscience sees
The boundless range of vast infinity,
Creation's round immense with all her worlds
Innumerous intervolving, and beyond
Chaos, and in her depths hell's dismal climes,
And beyond these infinitude of space
Unoccupied and void, where Fancy's self,
If she presume to follow, sinks absorb'd.
Yet HE thro' space which no circumference owns

Alone surveys, fills, guides, supports, all worlds:
And thro' each orb, thro' unconceiv'd extent,
All-present, sheds benignest influence,
Perpetual fount of life, and light, and bliss.

How low, how mean seem'd now, with these compar'd,
All other glories of celestial thrones
Or arch-angelic splendors: how confin'd,
Their loftiest states: how weak, their mightiest pow'rs.
To veil th' insufferable brightness, roll'd
In beamy floods from the eternal throne,
Rose o'er its outer verge a mighty arch,
High as the bow that paints the show'ry heav'n,
Whose sight-refreshing green on eyes o'erpower'd
Shone as an emerald. In sublime array
Nearer the seat supreme, magnific stood
Innumerable thrones, whereon appear'd
Highest archangels, their diviner brows
Girt with resplendent crowns of purest gold,
Enjoying bliss ineffable, who oft
Propitious rear with sceptred hand sublime
Refulgent censers, breathing odours, fraught
With incense wafted from the grateful praise
And pray'rs of all God's creatures infinite,
Dispers'd throughout his boundless universe.
Oft they themselves, their kingly sway resign'd,
Bending o'er beryll harps, from golden strings
And dulcet instruments of heav'nly frame
Elicit tones so soft, such thrilling sounds
To sweetest voices answering sweet, in strains

Grateful to God the Author of their bliss
That by the flowing harmony entranc'd
The choral spirits, in extatic pause,
Dissolve in holiest rapture.

Nor alone
From God's eternal presence these enjoy'd
Beatitude yet unconceiv'd and paid
Him eager adoration, but conven'd
Ever before the happy-beaming throne
Thousands of thousands of angelic hosts,
Innumerable stand, celestial spirits,
Seraphic kingdoms, and empyreal pow'rs
Nobler, elect intelligences, rang'd
In glorious companies, each sharing joys
Purer as nearer each permitted draw
Tow'rd unrestricted Deity, and know
More perfect, nature's universal cause.
Innumerous more their shining ranks extend
Than all the nations of the terrene globe
Commingled, when the earth at gen'ral doom
Shall yield up all her pristine habitants
Restor'd to second life, in face of heav'n
To meet in full assembly, and attend
Their final fate from this bright throne proclaim'd.
These ever-living states in union vast
Before th' All-sov'reign throne delighted yield
Meet homage, and in boundless concert praise
Th' All-perfect source of good, and sole to him
Ascribe all pow'r, all riches, wisdom, bliss
Glory and honour. 'Mid their radiate steps

Thus they in universal joys absorb'd,
Link'd in one wondrous chain of social love
Enjoy unbounded union, and delights
In varied harmony, while o'er them Peace,
Dove-like, still waves her soft, and silvery wings
Whispering of endless happiness. Survey'd
Awhile these heav'nly glories, where they stood
Hail'd by unnumber'd peers, th' immortal host
Arriv'd from earth's dim confines, now approach
The sacred steps that tow'rd the living throne
Lead up direct. When thro' disparted way
Seven high archangels, their empyreal shapes
Veil'd with their fulgent wings in meekest awe,
Like glitt'ring rainbows bent, softer in hues,
Ascend the hill of ever-during gold,
Or flaming diamond, which transcendent rose
The chosen altar of Omnipotence.
Prostrate, in bliss unutterable lost,
Th' immortal embassy adoring bend:
And down before th' Almighty King of Kings
Cast their illustrious crowns, disclaiming pow'r:
Nor broke expressive silence, till submist
Th' imperial Michael thus their will reveal'd.

"All-holy, pure, incomprehensible,
Eternal King, thou, whose Omnipotence
Surpasseth not thy goodness infinite,
Cause universal, whose Omniscient Spirit
Created, still pervades, sustains all worlds,
Thou see'st on earth, (of thy creation fair

Lov'd part) thy favor'd creature, Man, assail'd
By Satan's deadly wiles, who labours still
T' extirpate from the late enlighten'd globe
Knowledge of thee, now spreading thro' her climes
Inducing peace and happiness. He still
Burns to restore dark ignorance, and faith
In idols who delight in war and blood.
Late hath he pass'd to earth, a host immense
Conducting from his own tremendous world,
All madly bent in ruin more profound
To whelm man's race. Thou know'st, yet all his arts
Seeing, permittest; for thy wondrous ways
Excel conception of all bounded minds.
Else sure that pow'r, which into being call'd
Yon universe with all her countless worlds,
Ev'n heav'n, and us thy sons; created ev'n
Satan himself, with all his rebel host,
Whose horrid glory now is to insult
Thee, perfect good: that Pow'r Omnipotent
Which being gave, if so thy Will approv'd,
As instant could annihilate: yet thou,
Unmov'd, foreseeing, know'st the utmost end
Of his perverted malice, and delight'st
Ever by providential, silent means
To make that malice still elicit good.
We cannot mark so far, nor without fear
Our feebler understanding may survey
His desp'rate, subtlest labours to o'erwhelm
Still weaker man. Whence fancy and alarm
Persuade us, our own efforts might evene

Not void of use, t' oppose his deadly arts,
And aid mankind against their ruthless foe.
Suffer us then with those whom like desire
Impels to tempt th' adventurous emprize,
To earth descending, by our present aid
Satan's dark machinations to oppose,
Shielding mankind, as best our skill may deem."

He ceas'd: and suddenly the throne of God
Darkness o'erspread. Lightnings and sounds unknown
Of voices issuing roll'd around. Heav'n felt
The sign, and trembled thro' her boundless realms.
Down 'mid created space innumerous worlds
Rolling commingled in their beamy spheres
Shook on their steadfast axles. Earth herself,
Suspended vast with all her oceans, shook,
Acknowledging her Maker, uttering sounds
Heard not so high, save by the conscious ear
Of God alone. Hell, hid in chaos, knew
The signal, shuddering thro' her dread abodes.
Millions of angels instantaneous fall
Prostrate o'er heav'n. Awfullest Silence reigns,
Till from the viewless dark God spake these words.

"Can creature understand the ways of God?—
But if ye so desire and dare th' attempt,
Go, fearless. Aid mankind, as best ye deem.
Yet patiently endure whate'er of wrong
Or insult personal ye may receive
From hell's bad spirits, nor yourselves pollute

With them in fight conflicting. Not to you
I tell my secret counsels, which o'er rule
The works of yonder universe. Still ye
Trust to my constant Providence, which all
Sees and permits, and by calm, silent means
Unsearchable, makes all conduce for good."

Th' Almighty ceas'd. Her universal reign
Silence resumes. Now from th' Eternal Throne
Roll'd the dividing dark, and left unveil'd
Brightness, which no created being endures.
Th' empyreal Spirits from their sacred trance
Uprise by myriads. Then attuning all
Their soul-enlivening instruments, begin
A solemn chorus of extatic sounds,
Drawn from celestial harps, whose golden strings
Touch'd by angelic fingers drop perfume,
Or golden reeds of dulcet stop, combin'd
In grateful harmony with swelling tones
Blown from deep trumpets or loud organs' breath:
That heav'n and all her glitt'ring confines rang
Resounding with seraphic hymns, which far
On wings of music roll'd their raptur'd praise.

" Great are thy wond'rous works, all-perfect good,
Omnipotent: creation's King Supreme!
Thou all this heav'n, and yon innum'rous orbs
Which roll in various spheres thro' boundless space
Mad'st of thy lib'ral goodness: of their ends
And uses, watchful, as omniscient.
Yet not for everlasting these endure,

But at their destin'd periods pass away
Successive, till their countless habitants
Meet before thee, their Maker, Father, King,
Adoring, in their fit degrees of bliss;
While ever better, brighter worlds, to heav'n
Annex'd, assimilate in endless range,
Thy love will frame anew. When like ourselves,
Translated beings, spirits of the good
Elect of thee, shall disembodied pierce
Thy universal works magnificent,
Shall gradual know thyself, fountain of bliss,
Approaching ever thro' eternal time,
Till all the kingdoms of thy universe
Circle thy throne in one connected chain
Of peace, and love, and perfect happiness."

The sacred chorus tremblingly repos'd,
And now were heard alone the softer strains,
Still wont in heav'n. Strait the commission'd band,
Heralds and leaders of the new emprize,
Joyful to hear their anxious suit obtain'd,
Turn from th' empyreal blaze, and in array
Move on abreast beneath their shadowy wings,
While as they glide along the brilliant floor,
Enamour'd zephyrs, breathing odours, fraught
With cadence of celestial harmony,
Making more sweet the balmy air of heav'n,
Flutter with gentle play the varied plumes
Of their wide-arching pinions, which commov'd
Then sparkling wave, like agitated gems

Or beaten gold. Beneath their circling crowns
Their orient locks in streaming ringlets play'd
O'er their irradiate shapes.
So on they pass'd,
Not unadmir'd by many a seraph-choir
Circling on either hand: till now they reach,
Descending those rich steps which to the throne
Upled, th' associates of their mighty realm,
From whom selected soon, a glorious band
Of zealous spirits in compact array
Wait the high conduct of the sov'reign chief
On their new enterprize. Nor long delay'd
Michael, their kingly hierarch, to assume
Desired station at their head. And now
Stretching their gold-bright vans, thro' midst of heav'n
They steer their joyous course, a splendid train,
Far-flying to the place where ready stood
Numberless lofty chariots, fram'd for use
Of ev'ry angel, who commission'd way
Might oft times hold amid creation's worlds,
On heav'nly-destin'd journey. Now the host
Prepare their gorgeous cars, capacious, vast,
Around whose total frame commingling blaz'd
Topaz, and pearls, and gold. Soon all ascend,
And seated high as if on countless thrones,
In deep procession of immeasur'd breadth
Superb, august, that eye might scarce contain
Th' immense display, self-moving, all advance
In slow, magnific state o'er heav'n's wide realms,
Attended by unnumber'd radiant hosts,

Eager to view the glorious throng depart,
Till now their ranks attain the farthest bounds
Of heav'n. In prospect here before them lies
The universe of nature, infinite.
Now stop the chariots. Soon the total mass,
Its quadrate dense disparting, gradual form
Abreast one long, immeasurable line
Extending o'er heav'n's brink.
They wait command,
The throng'd attendant pow'rs with voice confus'd
Betide them prosperous speed and safe return,
And now upsend afar a deaf'ning shout
That check'd awhile th' harmonious sounds of heav'n,
For sudden lo! the whole extended host
Launch instantaneous from heav'n's extreme verge
Down amid vacuous space, and guide direct,
Buoyant, serene, their gentle-sloping way
Toward creation's worlds: while borne along
Rapid, soon distant seen, the glorious range
More splendid moves, than if a thousand suns
Should sail together thro' the vaulted sky.
The thronging angels on heav'n's chrystal brink
Admiring gaze, and mark the gliding cars
Approaching tow'rd creation's universe.
Yet might not eager admiration look
Devoid of fear, lest thro' such boundless space
Seeking the distant earth, they wander lost.
Till enter'd now amid the rolling orbs,
Soon from the straining ken the glimmering cars
Fade, gradual-lessening, then from sight conceal'd.

Or beaten gold. Beneath th
Their orient locks in strea cars
O'er their irradiate sha look
; while as these

Not unadmir'd b is enlarge to size
Circling on e ines now to sight are lost.
Descendi arting into space,
Upled with slacken'd speed, they all
Fr worlds immense, which overhead
wing hang and seem vast moving plains,
upon nothing. Up they gaze,
d, yet void of fear. Oft deep below,
And far around they turn their piercing ken,
And see unnumber'd worlds of various bulk
Moving thro' many a sphere diversified
In choral harmony, whose shapes diverse
Show'd mountains, vales, or shadowy-circling seas
Adapted to their diff'ring habitants.
Here ever various Suns effuse their force,
Whose flamy rays hurt not th' ætherial forms
Of heav'nly spirits, but in brighter shine
Of lustrous splendor deck'd their passing pomp.
While as they mark the transient orbs recede,
Still they behold thro' sphere succeeding sphere
Innumerous masses, swelling vast, opake,
That to the moving host continual shew
Varying eclipses, till at times arriv'd
Fronting some intervening world, its bulk
Hides total its fix'd Sun, and casts along
A shadow, broad, enormous, over all
The vast immeasur'd range of gliding cars.

Yet not to darkness then consign'd, for now
The native splendor of their beamy forms
Securely guides them thro' the dubious dusk:
Till from behind a re-appearing Sun
Obliquely shoots again his gradual rays.
Between these spheres oft sudden from below
With loud-astounding noise ascend immense
Comets impetuous, which sublime display
Broad-circling overhead one vast, bright blaze
Of spreading fire. Startled, yet soon compos'd,
The angels view their long elliptic flight,
As darting between worlds thro' space untried
These urge their way, taught by the pointing hand
Of God, his messengers for wisest ends.
Long thus the car-borne angels journey on,
Till passing now amid th' external bounds
(Known by a darker gleam of distant light)
Of a vast circling, yet dividual, sphere,
Nearest their eager view they glad behold
A semicircle huge of hazy light,
As if some rainbow of that duskier space
Had fall'n, and on mid air incumbent lay:
With bright'ning swell protrusive, stretching broad
From pole to pole across a world immense,
Dim-seen, opake. Joyful they hail the sign,
For now they know their rapid course has gain'd
Th' exterior limits of that spacious sphere,
Whose mighty concave holds man's earthly globe.
Enlarging still in bulk, now plain they know
Th' unwieldy planet whose far-distant orb

Urging along its slow, saturnine course
Men after Saturn name. And now they mark
Around ascending with unequal course
Various lesser globes, which each dispense
A wan, cold light upon that cheerless world.
Now as th' advancing legion gradual sails,
Wond'ring they view the broaden'd arch of light
Far-stretching horizontal, round the midst
Of Saturn's orb, at equal distance thrown,
A circle, radiant, grand, immeasurable,
Shedding propitious a reflected day
O'er the mid regions of the gloomy frame.
On its huge axis slowly-turn'd it roll'd
In awful state progressive thro' the void
Of the dim, twilight air. Whose regions pass'd,
Forward the angel-host direct their view
With piercing ken, in purpose bent to find
The distant sun of this capacious sphere,
Nor long in vain their keen-enquiring gaze
Explor'd its object, which at length appear'd
To their discerning view, at first a star
Of larger, glorious frame, and soon increas'd
Gradual, a ball of dull, and ruddy fire,
As when from some high hill the Trav'ler views
The full moon rising, with discolour'd orb
Far in the hazy east. With quicken'd zeal
Down thitherward they bend their yielding cars,
Scattering soft light amid the sullen air
Impetuous pierc'd. When lo! next strikes their view
Seen on one hand, nor seeming far-remov'd,

A world ev'n more gigantic than the globe
So lately pass'd. Awhile they gaze its form
Stupendous, whose vast surface lighter shone
Than that last world, but dusky-faint and sad:
And know th' enormous frame, to whose vast pomp,
Kingly-discern'd, Men add the name of Jove.
Themselves admire how such a wond'rous shape
Perpetual heaves his air-incumbent weight
Still faithful thro' his own wide-ambient course
Around the distant sun, which thence appears
In shape inferior to the lucent orbs
That round his own huge mass continual move,
Ascending and descending with just course,
Various, alternate, each eclipsing each,
And to his own imperial state dispense
Their ceaseless floods of tributary beams.—
Th' angelic legion on these realms t'alight
Attempt not: tho' desirous then to learn
What habitants and occupations strange
Befit this world prodigious. Anxious more
Were all to reach man's earth, the destin'd end
Of their long voyage. Cautious so they sail,
Lest that wide-moving pomp o'erwhelm their train,
In contact met: and underneath those orbs
Rapid descend, which overhead ere long
Sublime-o'ershadowing on their glorious road
Passing appear, commov'd. The host advance
Towr'd the magnific, still-enlarging sun,
Wond'rous appearing thro' that space immense
A vast immeasurable sea of light,

Brighter than glowing fire, or molten gold.
Soon they behold, wheeling its sullen round
Gloomy and sad, another mighty globe
Of solemn port: no moon it seem'd to boast
Swelling its state, but self-dependent roll'd
In gradual course of haughty dignity
Around the sov'reign sun, whose motion soon
Knew the celestial band, and joyous hail'd
As that majestic planet, from man's earth
Less widely distant, to whose proud aspect
Observant men have join'd the name of Mars.
And now strait opposite the central sun
The heav'nly legion seem, and soon discern
Between his boundless ocean of bright rays
And their own brilliant train, a beauteous world
On which the monarch of perpetual day
Diffus'd his sweetest beams; that hence it seem'd
All fair, all summer, mid delicious air
Calm-gliding thro' the blue expanse, around
The genial source of light. No moon here beam'd,
For none was needed, while its radiant course
So favor'd shone thro' ever glitt'ring space.
That soon th' observant angels recognize
The planet fair, which mortal men surnâme
The matchless Queen of beauty and of love.
Nor did not then their dazzled ken perceive,
Beyond, careering on its ardent course
Nearest the full resplendent sun, an orb
Oerwhelm'd in glist'ring radiance, which appear'd
Darting on every side his piercing beams

Instinct with light and heat, yet singly shone
In magnitude less grand than those bright frames,
Errant perceiv'd amid this glorious sphere.
Nor did they gaze of its terrestrial name
Ignorant, but discern the rapid orb,
To whose fleet motion conscious men the name
Add of the winged Mercury. Their speed
Th' impatient legion hasten glad, for now
They know their certain course not distant far
From man's expected earth, their anxious port.
Thence thro' the bright-illumin'd æther wide
Around they gaze, nor far remov'd perceive
Seen on one hand in her own beamy zone
'Twixt the proud Mars and Venus' radiant way
The planet Earth, known by th' attendant globe
Which o'er her hung. Instant the joyous host
Utter a shout, which through the boundless air
Resounding high amid the peopled space
Pass'd, echoed far from rolling world to world.

And now nought intercepts the full display
Of the round Earth with her o'erhanging moon
In prospect plain, magnificently grand;
O'er which the temper'd sun dispens'd his light
Of genial radiance fair, serenely mild:
While as the chariots rapid move, the earth
Swells out immense, disclosing to the sight
Her shining seas, and solid continents,
Broad interchange: while swell'd no less the moon
Displaying caverns vast, and seas, and shores

And tow'ring mountains numerous rang'd along
Of various form. Swift-gliding soon o'er these,
The radiant chariots, in conjunct array,
Stop, hov'ring: and ere long with gradual poise
Descending settle on the glimm'ring tops
Of the moon's hills, here first (as late resolv'd)
Alighting. Seated thus, the angels gaze
On the vast scene around, and mark what now
Seem stars on stars to distance infinite
Extended. Backward then their wond'ring eyes
They bend along their own immeasur'd course,
And see the lessen'd sun, and those last orbs
So fair, diminish'd now to glorious stars;
And far beyond survey the countless worlds
Which late they pass'd, appearing now to view
Millions of twinkling lights.
At such display
Awhile in admiration lost, they pause,
Till their attentive leader Michael broke
Enraptur'd Silence with these thoughts express'd.

"Astonishing and awful sure must be
Our recollected thought, nor can we fail
Profoundest admiration and meek sense
Both of God's goodness and omnipotence,
When we reflect that some short ages past,
Within our own remembrance, all these worlds
And radiant spheres, which now our course has cross'd,
Had no existence: but dark, formless, void,
Chaos tumultuous roar'd where these bright orbs

Now roll in beauteous harmony, and fill
With cheerful life before unpeopled space!
Unthought in heaven, save by the prescient mind
Of God alone, who pre-existent there
From all eternity perhaps had liv'd
Alone, superlatively blest, ere yet
Perfect spontaneous goodness mov'd him first,
Delighting in creation, to create
A race of angels to enjoy and know
Him, source of happiness: degrees diverse,
And orders, and in diff'rent ages made,
Immortal most, or all. Since we ourselves
So many æras of revolving time,
Seeming (so blest they roll'd) but as a day,
Remember to have pass'd in tranquil bliss
With our Creator King, or ever yet
Swoln with ambition the archangel high,
Satan, with his perfidious pow'rs rebell'd,
And soon was cast from heaven in dreadful fight
Down to th' infernal deep. Then to repair
Heaven's loss, and add splendor and glories new
To his creation, we remember well
When his omnipotence determin'd first
To form this universe and all these worlds,
Each with its proper habitants, to each
By all-creative wisdom suited well:
Among the rest, yon earth then moulded fair,
And on her happy globe a creature man
Of heaven high-favor'd, form'd for joy and bliss;
Which he enjoy'd, till him God's envious foe

Seduc'd to disobedience, tho' forewarn'd.
Then we remember, when her genial face
A deluge of destructive waters spread;
Which all her beauties in confusion whelm'd
And shapeless ruins, whose rude vestiges
Ev'n yet remain, broke into continents
And seas, and rocky shores, and craggy hills.
And now we know, that at some fated time
When the full number of the good elect
Shall join the heav'nly choirs, yon rolling earth,
With these surrounding elements, shall yield
Their being to destructive flames of fire.
Then from their flagrant ashes shall arise
Other more perfect worlds, which shall be link'd
In glorious range to heav'n, and all these orbs
May undergo some better, happier change
At God's due seasons, and perhaps be dwelt
By angels and the spirits of the blest,
Thro' endless ages still more perfect growing,
Till gradual they attain honour supreme,
Become archangels, near the throne of God
Enshrin'd on radiant seats, partaking there
His presence, glories, and unutter'd joys.
But let us now descend: for these high thoughts,
Proper alone to God, absorb our pow'rs
In contemplations of astonishment;
That we forget our purpos'd embassy,
And themes, more fitting our conception.—
Prepare we now to seek Britannia's isle."

So as he spoke, a pensive holy trance
Which held th' angelic train in mute delight,
Yielded diviner feelings to rich cells
Of happy memory. All now assent,
And from their station'd cars the joyful host
In splendid range, descend. Then at command
Forward their way directing, half on foot,
Half flying, thro' the pure ætherial air
Serene without a cloud, on even wings
O'er the bright varied surface of the moon
All glide along, repairing to the verge
Whence plain they can survey th' adjacent earth.
Downward they gaze, all eager to discern
Where mid her various lands and mingling seas
Lay Albion's pleasant isle, engirt with waves;
While as the earth with ever-changing scene
Turn'd gradual her vast bulk, they soon perceive
Heav'd into light far on the utmost verge
A glimm'ring isle, gray-swelling on the view,
Till clear it now display'd a fair extent
Of gently-waving hills, and vales, and plains,
And winding rivers, deck'd with sun and shade
Various. Appear'd its placid clime t' enjoy
A temp'rate, genial air: favor'd it seem'd
Beyond the other climes not distant seen;
Which shew'd, some black with rude-projecting rocks
Inhospitably barren: some appear'd
Parch'd by too fervid rays, their verdure all
Embrown'd and sad: others enwrapt in snows
Seem'd as one glitt'ring waste, wild, dreary, cold.

V. 1168—1197.

While to the fancy Albion's verdant plains
Kind, genial breezes and mild airs refresh'd,
Blown from her circling seas, that fair around
All nature smil'd. Pleas'd the celestial band
Survey the scene, impatient to descend:
And mounting soon their ready chariots, all
On the broad summit of the lunar hills
Wait, eager to depart. When mindful still
Of their high embassy, their zealous chief
Thus to the band his careful thought propos'd.

"Descending strait to earth, our earliest care
Must be to join our former pow'rs: and learn
From these the state of each opposing host.
If yet the Christian camp, their destin'd charge,
Uninjur'd rest from Satan's dark deceits;
Not yet provok'd to battles premature:
If too the parted leaders have return'd
With new-assembled pow'rs: which haply found,
Soon shall our favor'd legions in array
Of martial splendor toward Exham's tow'rs
March with more ample strength to meet in fight
Their savage foes: nor long, we trust, shall fail
England's great Monarch from that pest to free
His country, and his high designs atchieve."

All joyful hear: and at expected sign
Buoyant commove, and urging swift their way
Dart far thro' æther, till o'er Albion's isle
High-hov'ring they arrive, and gradual all

Descend in wavy balance, till at length
They touch with gentle fall the fleecy clouds
Which o'er the earth float high on curling wings. V. 1226—1255.
Sudden the gorgeous train, their motion rein'd,
Stop, gen'ral, and the chariots resting soft
Hang pois'd. Behold! at once their orient seats
The angels quit, and on their outspread wings
Joyful sail downward thro' the yielding air,
To mortal sight invisible, yet they
Clearly discern th' opposing hosts, and plains
Spread o'er with thousand tents.
Tow'rd these they steer
Their easy course, and soon upon the tops
Of hills, whose height o'erlook'd the warlike plains
Of Wereham, with supreme delight express'd,
Discern on watch their own associate peers,
Shrin'd in a radiant cloud. These strait they join
With friendly gratulation, nor less joy
Surpriz'd the watchful legion to behold
Now with their chief from heav'nly realms return'd
So many friends, well known in mutual bliss.
From which attentive band the new-arriv'd
Soon hear of welcome tidings to their wish.—
" That yet the Christian camp, the destin'd charge,
Uninjur'd rests from Satan's dark deceits.
That all the parted leaders are return'd
With new-assembled pow'rs: that Alfred's skill
Has form'd to battle all the peasant train:
That with the morrow the sixth sun will rise,
In solemn council nam'd, when all the host

Shall march tow'rd Exham's tow'rs in full array
To meet in battle their expecting foes:
Wherefore the time demands that instant all
The heav'nly band throughout the Christian camp
Yield prosperous aid, and fill with active zeal
The warriors' hearts, in preparation met
For their so near departure."—This resolv'd,
Instant the bright celestial train, conjunct,
Move tow'rd the English camp, by mortal eyes
Unseen, where soon arriv'd, all to their charge
Among the busy legions take their way.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK VII.

Evening. The English prepare to depart the following day, in pursuit of the Danes. Feasting in the camp. Night. Departure of the English in the morning. The chiefs described. Alfred addresses the army. March of the English through the southern provinces, ravaged by the Danes on their passage to Exeter. The army rests on its march. The approach of the English army is foretold to Guthrun by a heavenly messenger. He warns his army, part of which goes out to meet the English and attacks them. The English pitch their tents near Exeter. Religious ceremonies observed by the English previous to battle. Alfred sends a flag of truce into the Danish camp, with presents to ransom the English captives. The request is denied by the Danes. The embassy partakes of a Danish feast, and sees the religious rites of the Danish prophetesses. A vision of the Pagan Deities. Both armies prepare for battle.

ALFRED.

BOOK VII.

V. 1—19.

NOW Evening in the west her golden throne
Uplifted, rob'd in purple-varying clouds,
And at her look serene from ev'ry tree
Shot lengthen'd shadows, which to beast and bird
Warn'd soft repose, while calm-descending dews
Refresh'd the earth, till in the bright'ning east
Titania rose.
O'er all the English camp
A scene of preparation fills the view:
Soldiers in flamy armour mix convolv'd
Amid the glimm'ring tents, while thousand spears
Passing along with ever changeful course
Bespeak in multitudinous concourse met
The total bands. Amid the martial crowds
The chiefs pass frequent, and survey the works
On ev'ry hand, whose aspect bore alike
Signs of departure: pond'rous vehicles
Loaded with heavy armour, and the weight
Of tented habitations, roll along,

While countless steeds, of some approaching stir
Conscious, amid the mingled agitation, fill
The vaulted air with their resounding neighs.
For now from all their provinces diverse
Return'd, with pow'rful fresh-assembled trains
Of haughty warriors, the recruited chiefs
Conjoin their force; and many a new-form'd band
Of rescued villagers, to deeds of arms
Train'd by their monarch's skill, aspire for war.
That all the mighty host, now wait alone
Tomorrow's dawn, to hail their destin'd march.
All long to hear their sov'reign's due commands.
Nor these were wanted long; for now their chief,
Th' imperial Alfred, with paternal care
Pass'd, and on ev'ry hand his counsel glad
Dispens'd, exhorting, and with ardent zeal
Inspiring all. Tells them their ev'ry hope
Rests in their proper valour, in their cause
Sacred and just, and blessing of high heav'n.
Nor did not proud joy thro' the Monarch's breast
Exulting swell, as he perceiv'd each heart
Burn with responsive courage to his wish.

The heralds summon by command the chiefs
Of ev'ry legion in the monarch's tent
To meet in high consult. Prompt all obey.
Here soon the ready sov'reign opes the cause
Of meeting, to arrange the purpos'd march;
Nor lingers here dissension, but at once
Unanimous all fix that with the dawn

The total army shall commove, nor stop
Their joyful course, till near the banks of Exe
Encamping they repose their tents, and fire
Their hopes with prospect of their foes at hand.
Here too the venerable Osmund tells
And Oddune, Devon's valiant duke, that late
The Frisian seamen, thro' their provinces
Collected by persuasion and reward,
Are parted in a num'rous band to fill
The English fleet, near Wareham's menac'd shores,
There under Octher's high command to wait
The wish'd departure of the Danish ships
Preparing from Dorsetian coasts to seek
The spacious ports of Exe. When as enjoin'd
Octher will send swift heralds to apprise
His anxious sov'reign, and if need require,
Intreat his presence in the ships, to cheer
The seamen and diffuse his pow'rful aid,
When on their destin'd voyage they attack
In naval battle the piratic Danes.
Nor mid the solemn council were forgot
Their hapless countrymen, who now perhaps
Within the Danish camp are doom'd to bear
Horrors unknown, captives by chance of war.
Gladly the fix'd resolve is heard around,
That soon as o'er the plains of Exe shall rise
Their tented homes, the monarch will depute
Humane a noble embassy with gifts
To move the stubborn foe, and ransom all
The captive train. These fix'd proposals heard,

V. 49—76.

And the full council ended, all retire.

The thronging legions o'er their copious feasts
Where all partake repast, in converse high
Raise animating themes, that fire the heart
With prosp'rous expectation, while around
Bards wake the songs of other days, that rouse
To fervent rapture the transported soul.
As when a band of hunters over night
Preparing for the chace of savage beasts
Wait with keen expectation for the hour,
When the sun rising o'er the misty hills
Shall light their shadowy caves, and hear elate
The shrill horn echo thro' the joyous land:
So these th' approach of their intended march
Hail eager, and are cheer'd with harp and song.

Meantime the royal table is prepar'd
For sumptuous revelry, and all the chiefs
Haste thither, as propos'd: whom glad the King
Greets as they enter his capacious tent.
And soon along the spacious board are rang'd
The mailed heroes, venerable priests,
And beauteous females, wives and daughters fair
Of many a chief, in highest honour held.
At one extreme the noble monarch sat,
(On either hand a sacred bard) and pledg'd
The full regale around. The splendid dome
Rings with the notes of joy, and eager hope
Shines on each countenance. The choral bards

Wake solemn harmonies on echoing harps,
And swell the tide of song, that o'er the soul
Rolls as some murm'ring river spreads his streams
Gay-glitt'ring o'er the freshen'd fields. So pass'd
Cheerful the hours, till in her mid career
Night thro' the wide pavilion of the sky
Sail'd calm, and her dark robe o'erspread with gold
Hung high o'er all the earth, her stately brows
Crown'd with the crescent moon. While sole were heard
Along the tranquil air the murm'ring sounds
Of waves that from the tide-uplifted sea
Roll'd on th' adjacent shores.

The chiefs aware
Retire at length all to their proper tents
Seeking the balm of sleep, resolv'd alike
With the first blush of dawn to meet in arms
And join th' array of all th' assembled host,
Impatient for their promis'd march. With these
Move their fair wives, whose looks alone inspire
Each warrior with proud courage, and resolve
To conquer, or to die in fight, or ere
The brutal foe attempt dishonour foul
On their soft charms, or hurt their helpless babes.

Th' imperial Alfred leads his beauteous wife,
The lov'd Elsweda, and his sister kind
Burthred's fair widow, tow'rd an inner tent
There on the peaceful couch to seek repose.
Ent'ring within its spacious range, they pass
Its chambers, separate by falling folds

Of silken texture, while fair virgins meet BOOK
The honour'd Queen, daughters of noble chiefs, VII.
Her willing handmaids, leading her as wont
Strait to her own apartment, where her robes
Of costly frame unloos'd, and soft dispos'd
Within their ample ward, th' attendant fair
Fit to her beauteous limbs a slender vest,
Meeter for calm repose. Meantime the King
Within his chamber, where extended stood
His own broad art-deck'd couch, and near dispos'd
Another bed of lesser frame that held
His beauteous infants, loos'd his armour off
Heavy and bright, and his broad shield depos'd
Helmet and spear, beside the glitt'ring couch:
Then in soft raiment cloth'd his manly limbs:
And waited sole his honour'd spouse, who stay'd
Not long, but his kind sister to her couch
Conducting first, into his presence came, when both,
As wont, approaching their lov'd offspring's bed
Tenderly on them gaz'd, and as they slept,
Saw smiles of peace adorn their rosy cheeks,
Which soft their parents kiss'd, and to the care
Commended them of heav'n, to bless their lives,
And make them good and happy. This perform'd,
The virtuous pair turn'd from them, and beside
Their own resplendent couch, as ever wont,
Knelt humble, and to heav'n their sacred pray'r
Meek, void of ostentation, thus prefer'd.

" Father of all, from thy sublime abode

Deign to effuse on us, on all our race
Thy gifts of good: ever may peace and love
Flourish o'er all the earth, and may this isle
Own thy peculiar favor, while her sons
Emulous still by deeds of virtue strive
To win thy blessing, and thee first to please:
Whence good and happy this fair land may rise
The glory and example of the earth.
If such be thy high will, may discord end
And war, and from our country far remove
Whatever may be evil, till one bond
Of blissful union ev'ry nation join,
Ascribing each to thee all pow'r, all praise."

This said, in tranquil rest both soon forgot
The cares of day, when of the good, (o'erlook'd
Never by heav'n) and of their meek employ
Observant, Michael, high angelic chief
Hov'ring aloft with a celestial choir,
Touch'd with delight to mark th' endearing scene,
Soon to their couch dispatch'd a winged train
To cheer their slumbers with auspicious dreams.
While he above on thoughts of large intent
Occupied, pass'd o'er all the camp and saw
Around whate'er might need his fost'ring aid:
Nor was his radiant band, to execute
Whate'er their thought propos'd, unskill'd or slow.
Into the sleeping warriors they instil
New strength of body with celestial touch:
And thro' the cells of fancy they inspire

[illegible] with patriot energy and sense
[illegible]'s sufferings: that each noble heart
[illegible] with fresh courage and resolve to end
[illegible]ories so deep, by glorious victory.
Before the raptur'd monarch, as he slept,
A radiant vision rose in dream divine.
An angel form, resembling in her look
His own lov'd wife, yet ev'n more heav'nly touch'd
With all-surpassing beauty, gradual broke
Thro' fragrant-breathing air, in robes of light
Set as with stars: her beamy tresses bound
On her bright head, and rounded with a crown
Of gems celestial, left reveal'd her neck
And half-op'd bosom, orient-pure, to view.
With look inimitably sweet, and smile
Excelling mortal grace, the heav'nly shape
Approach'd, and meekly bending kiss'd his lips,
At which soft touch seem'd his extatic soul
T' expire, and glide into the form divine.
She, gently back withdrawn, the monarch's eyes
Touch'd with ambrosial hand; immediate beam'd
A golden radiance all around, whose shine
Unfolded to the tranced sense a band
Of angel beings, match'd in shape and grace,
Floating at ease amid the balmy air,
In ev'ry fair hue vested; in their hands
They bore resplendent harps and instruments
Of heav'nly stop, which tenderly attun'd,
Pour'd a sweet concert on the monarch's ear.

" Honour to England's King, the great, the good!
All-hail, immortal hero: in each age
Rever'd, the father of thy country: thine
Is heav'n's good-will and favor: persevere
In all thy blest designs: dangers and pain
Scorn: and in gracious Providence confide.
To thee thy grateful country still shall owe
Her glory; and success shall crown thy toils."—

Sung this glad benison, the magic air
Melted in sweet cadence: and behold!
Waving their graceful hands, the heav'nly train
Gradual recede from sight. In fervent trance
The King awakes, his eyes suffus'd in tears;
Tears of extatic joy. Recov'ring soon,
Gently himself he rais'd, and turn'd his eye
Tow'rd his lov'd spouse, whom by a lamp's soft light
Hung from the tent's broad dome, he sleeping saw
In beauty scarce less winning than the shape
Seen in his dream: which now her look recall'd,
And in his heart more vivid-deep infus'd.
On her in mute delight awhile he gaz'd
With fondness inexpressible: then bent,
Press'd on her vermeil cheek a tender kiss
That woke her with a smile; and as her eyes
Beam'd sweet affection, he in extacy
Leaning with hand across her snowy neck
Reveal'd to her his vision of delights.
O'erjoy'd, she heard, and uttering with meek look
A grateful orison, well-pleas'd inferr'd

Prosperous omens and heav'n's fav'ring care.
Thus wan'd the hours of night, till in her turn
Dawn from th' horizon-verge her orient light
Shedding upon the earth, veil'd all the stars
In her grey robe of dews.
Ere the moist sun
O'er the red ocean-waves the first broad curve
Lifted of his resplendent orb, behold!
Throughout th' awaken'd camp the English host
Assembles. Soldiers in bright armour clad
Innumerable move, on various works
Eager employ'd. Their tents they quick depose,
Whence crowding issue forth in pensive trains
Their venerable sires, whose hoary locks
Hung o'er their feeble limbs, and matrons old,
Daughters, and beauteous wives, and helpless babes.
The pond'rous vehicles beneath their load
Of warlike stores, groan as they roll along
In order'd range. While as the morning beams
Ascending tinge with gold the eastern clouds,
Lo! standards numberless unfurl'd broad-wave
O'er all the dewy air their glitt'ring pomp
And martial blazonry, to whose bright sign
Under their mighty chiefs in dense array
Each haughty province moves. Splendid their view
Appears, as when the various bow of heav'n
Strides o'er the shadowy hills, when ev'ning spreads
Gold on their beamy tops, and glitt'ring show'rs
Descend upon the woods in ev'ry hue.

Here noble Oddune mov'd, in burnish'd brass
All-arm'd, and moving seem'd a tow'r of gold.
Behind his rolling ensign, awful came
The venerable Herbert, his grey locks
And hoary beard wide-streaming on the air,
As snow involves some lofty mountain's top.
Aylwin was there, the gallant, and the bold,
Exulting in his might, his dark-brown face
Stern-smiling underneath his shady helm;
Strong as a lion roaming for his prey.
Rayner advanc'd with solemn pace, whose mien
Fix'd and sedate, struck on th' arrested heart
Involuntary awe: his earth-bent looks
Seem'd brooding tempests, as he gloomy came
Terrible in aspect, frowning like Jove
When all-enrag'd he hurls amid the skies
Impetuous thunders and o'erwhelms the groves.
The vet'ran Edric there appear'd, his limbs
O'erhung with lofty plumes and streaming hair
That from his casque thick-wav'd; behind he look'd,
Call'd onward his adopted boys, and seem'd
An eagle when he leads his youthful sons
First from their lofty nest to dart on earth
Amid th' astonish'd flocks. Hianfrid came
Behind, all-glitt'ring, radiant in his arms
As shines the west at eve. Harold was near,
Less gaudy, but adorn'd in arms, that shot
Light'nings where'er he turn'd, and in his voice
Storms roll'd. The loyal Berthun here advanc'd
Under his lofty banner, and appear'd

V. 281—810

While o'er him shadows from its brilliant folds
Play'd various, like the moon in golden state
Piercing her luminous veil. Osmund was there,
High-favor'd chief, on whose serener brows
Sat meeken'd resignation, yet with grief
Solemn and thoughtful blent, as memory
Ever to his awaken'd fancy brought
His Athelard lost: yet dreadful valour shone
Around him, whose sole look might pall the heart
With pow'rless terror, as he stately mov'd,
Rapt in himself, with fixed eye, that gleam'd
Destruction, low'ring like a night of clouds
Advancing over heav'n, ere from their sides
Fires flash, and swelling thunders shake the earth.
Before them all pre-eminent appear'd
Alfred, imperial sov'reign: at their head
He shone in radiant arms, emboss'd with gold
Refulgent as the sun at beamy noon
Illumining the skies, when all the hills
Shine, and his glory decks each winding stream.
Beside the King his flamy standard rose
Aloft broad-waving, gorgeous-bright, with gold
And varied gems o'erspread, beaming as stars
That spangle heav'n's blue concave. On the host
He gaz'd, admiring, as their steely ranks
Blaz'd on his view, while spears and lances wav'd
In order'd splendor o'er their gleamy helms;
And steeds, caparison'd in rich array,
Proud stood, innumerous, wheresoe'er his eye
Shot its keen glance. All-bright, all-fresh in arms

They stood, like trees which in the dews of morn
Sparkling, o'erspread the sides of fertile hills,
And see below amid the spacious vales
Their forms reflected in the sunny lakes.
High-seated on his foaming steed, that pranc'd
Beneath his nodding plumes, pawing the earth
Under rich mantlings, glad the monarch pass'd
From rank to rank, and view'd their full array:
While in his looks beneficence and love
Shone, temper'd with intrepid valour. Soon
Checking his proud career, the sov'reign stopt
In the mid-van, and thus the host address'd.

"Now, Britons, countrymen, the joyful day
Hails us, when arm'd afresh with stronger pow'rs
We march to battle, and in fields of fame
Meet our fell foes, the sons of murder, spoil,
Slav'ry, and endless death. Who now will turn
Traitor to England's cause, himself, and heav'n?
Fly the base villain—But no trembling wretch
Pollutes your noble ranks—Ye, noble souls,
Brave sons of Britain, in the gory fight
Prepar'd to die, or conquer, now come on,
Follow your King—who asks no other name,
Than brother, fellow-soldier, in the cause
Of England, freedom, laws, and life, and heav'n.
Children, wives, aged sires, for you we fight,
To save from massacre, and rape, and chains,
You and your race—your trembling limbs from wounds—
Your homes from fires. In your defence, new strength

Nerves all our frames. Soon on th' astonish'd foe
Descending like a tempest we will rush
With pow'r unconquerable. Ev'ry arm
Shall smite their shatter'd legions; ev'ry blow
Prostrate a savage ruffian; nor one fear
Possess one English heart. Heav'n on our side,
Ready with aid, to ev'ry soul shall bring
New courage, force untir'd to ev'ry arm.
Oh! ere the blushing sun behold our ranks
Fly backward, struck with terror, may the earth
Swallow us undisgrac'd, or may the blood
Pouring from ev'ry vein, the field of death
Imbrue with crimson-smoking floods to veil
With one red mantle all the heaps of slain.
No! while one rank can lift the reeking sword,
We rush to death, or glorious victory."

V. 370—398.

So saying, he led on with signal wont
Th' impatient army, who advanc'd along
With shouts resounding thro' the vault of heav'n,
As at the mouth of some capacious gulph
The torrents rushing from alarmed hills
Roar o'er opposing rocks, and to the sea
Tumultuous roll, when far and wide the land
Totters, and ocean many a league resounds.
Onward the legions move, in multitudes
Numberless as the pilgrim bands that take
Their eager journey toward Mecca's fanes
To memorize their prophet, when her sons
Arabia yields profus'd; and Persia sends

Her thronging nations from her wide domains
To meet from burning Afric's southern climes
The sable strangers of a distant world.

Behind their proud career in deep array
The train of beauteous females come, the limbs
Of tott'ring age; th' unconscious bud of youth;
Borne all on trains immense of vehicles,
Rolling with solemn noise: a barrier vast
To guard the final rear. Thro' countries wide
O'er hill, and vale, and champain broad, they pass,
And mark alone the dismal vestiges
Of their rapacious foe, cruel as death.
Where'er the eye may turn, sole strike the view
Villages flaming; happy rural homes
Ras'd to the ground; dark forests on the sight
Stretching their ghastly shapes, a naked range
Of blacken'd trunks, devour'd by fires: the fields
A desolated waste, unpeopled, bare,
Where solitary Ruin reigns, or holds
Orgies with grim confusion: stately towns
Pillag'd and sack'd, o'er whose high-tow'ring spires
And castled heights, huge smoking volumes roll
Horrible clouds, that speak below a scene
Of fiery devastation: solemn fanes
Homes of religion's peaceful ministers,
Unroof'd and open to the common air,
Reft of their habitants; and all around
Dire marks of savage murder pall the heart.
Leagued here with Horror, frightful Rapine stalks

In vest imbrued with blood, o'er ev'ry plain.
Thus on their rapid course they pass along,
Both while the climbing sun with aspect red
Gleaming thro' smoky darkness, to his throne
Meridian rose; and while his falling track
Inclin'd the world to rest, and o'er the skies
Fair-spread the pensive, soothing tints of eve.

Now twilight o'er the earth her dewy veil
Hung modest, when successively reveal'd
From their äërial mansions graceful walk'd
The earliest stars, that to rest-seeking men,
Fair heralds, tell th' approaching steps of night.
But not the shine of ev'ning stars might pierce,
Constant, the mournful gloom of smould'ring clouds
Pregnant with fate, which from the wasted face
Of England's southern provinces arose.
Nor could their radiant beams efface the glare
Of streaming fires, whose dimly-fading light
From many a spot amid the troubled air
Flash'd frequent: while the heart-struck English host
Preparing for the night to court repose,
Beneath the shelt'ring covert of tall hills
Within the bosom of a vale, their speed
Delay, and under their soon-fitted tents
Seek rest.—Others within the neighb'ring cots
Of a sequester'd vill wait tardy sleep
Which flies their anxious thoughts. Thus while the host
Rest troubled, were th' immortal sons of light
Bright-hov'ring o'er them. Active and awake

These to new softness with mysterious hand
Temper the elements and air of night,
And guard their silent legions from approach
Of obscure dangers, till the rosy morn,
Peering thro' clouds of gold, o'er hill and vale,
Diffus'd with fragrant hand refreshing light.
Scarce were the first bright streaks of orient beams
Shot from dawn's purple eye, reflected soft
On the hill tops, ere from their ductile homes
Innumerous issuing, all th' impatient host
Assembles, eager to renew their march.
Nor long delay prevents, but in array
Total dispos'd, their re-commencing march
Commoves, and ardent they impel along
Their glad, unwearied legions; till at length
From the broad summit of a lofty hill,
Whence wide in prospect lay the country round,
With bursting joy th' expectant host discerns
The distant waters of fair-winding Exe,
First seen.
Immediate from the total ranks
Rose a loud shout exultant, that afar
O'er the wide, subject country echoing roll'd,
Borne on the burden'd gales. With swifter haste,
More eager, on they rush, inflam'd with hope
Soon to descry the wide-surrounding camp
Of their fierce foe. As when a thronging herd
Of hungry lions in the sultry wilds
Of Afric, stun the air with thund'ring roars
That all the country trembles, as they pour

V. 457—486.

Infuriate o'er the barren wastes, in view
Of some low village, fill'd with hoarded prey;
So rush'd with dreadful noise the English host.
While as their rapid torrent spreads along,
From far high-hov'ring o'er the Danish camp
(Ere yet the English troops its skirts discern
Gleaming aloft by Exham's wave-wash'd tow'rs)
The Demon pow'rs alarm'd the coming host
Watchful observe, o'er which in squadron bright
Moving, as with augmented pow'rs, they see,
Surpriz'd, a splendid band of heav'nly forms,
Novel in view. Nor was th' infernal throng
Unconscious then, that in the sacred cause
Of England, menac'd by their dreadful arts,
Heav'n had dispatch'd new trains, while earth had join'd
Ardent, recruited legions to assist
Th' unwearied efforts of the patriot King.

Instant the host malignant swift-descend
Amid the vacant Danes, who thro' their camp
Rioting in continuous feasts, the gift
Of emulous chieftains, prodigal of spoil,
Pass the glad day in revelry and song,
Or drown their surfeit in oblivious sleep,
Relax'd from toils of war. These soon the host,
Invisible, by ominous signs of fate
Or awful phantoms of portentous view,
O'er all th' extended camp the hope of war
Renewing, from lethargic ease awake
To thoughts of mightiest fury. In his tent,

Where thoughtful, and alone, for some proud feast
Guthrun, the sov'reign chief, prepar'd, while oft
High, martial cares absorb'd his brooding soul;
Lo! radiant-vested, to his startled view
A female form appear'd, of heav'nly port,
Taller than human, beaming fair, as shines
The moon, when wide she gilds the dewy earth.
High in her hand she bore a dazzling spear:
She stood, and on him her majestic brows
Bending, that as he gaz'd, a look more mild
Assum'd, with silv'ry voice thus broke the air.

V. 516—543.

"Why, chief of men, thus o'er th' enervate camp
Swell the rife notes of feasts and revelry,
While to your guardless confines proud approach
Innumerous hosts of warriors, fierce as wolves,
Breathing destruction?—Know ye not my name?
I from Valhalla's glitt'ring mansions come,
Gna, honour'd messenger of heav'n's high King
Odin, Almighty Father, God of war.
He sends me down to rouse your sleeping rage.
Your cause he favors: hence this anxious care.
Haste, arm for battle, ere th' impetuous foe
O'erwhelm you, and atchieve glories undue,
And yielded only by supine repose."

Severe she spake, and turning, her broad wings
Unfolded, sparkling rich with orient gold,
Which, as she sail'd along th' illumin'd tent,
Wav'd fragrance, till amid the sounding air

Upborne, she pass'd from sight. O'eraw'd, the King
Stood silent a brief space, absorb'd in thought,
Till such high embassy revolv'd, at once
Amid his thoughtless host th' astonish'd chief
Passes: to all with awful voice proclaims
Th' intelligence divine, and signal will
Vouchsaf'd of heav'n's great King. Amaz'd they hear,
And ceasing instant their mad revels, seize
Their arms, and for expected war prepare,
All thoughts of indolence dispell'd, and sole
Insatiate fury burning ev'ry breast.
Throughout the camp the busy legions move,
Strength'ning the works, and for the gen'ral fight
Madd'ning exhort each other, soon as ere
Th' advancing foe (so wills the sovereign chief)
Shall meet in full array. Not thus restrain'd,
The proud chief Amund, with impatient zeal
Glowing, the kingly leader bold accosts.

V. 544—572.

"Let not me here thus wait, but instant give
To eager glory the high meed she claims.
Before the gen'ral fight, I with a band
Select, will meet the foe, and daring wrest
From his first van hazardous deeds of fame,
And nobler, bold exploits, that shall inflame
Our host to fury, while they see us win
Earnest of future vict'ries, and the war
Gallant commencing, merit feasts and joys
Yet future, and record our names in song."

So saying, without resistance he collects

A chosen train, to whom his voice inspires
Courage, and bids their fiery band disdain
Numbers unmatch'd, but from the first approach
Of the near foe win trophies of renown.
Their pond'rous battle axes swift they seize
And their huge limbs in skins of savage beasts
Involve: then grimly-fierce they issue forth,
As when a troop of Tartars thro' wild woods,
Cloth'd in the skins of wolves, their perilous way
Urge in the chase of costly furs, and brave
Fearless the piercing cold, or fell attack
Of roaming tygers. O'er their heads advance,
Exulting, an infernal band, and add
Signs of success. Resound their hideous shouts
That Exham's tow'rs re-echo, and the waves
Of rolling Exe, as tow'rd th' apparent host
Of English on they rush, now first beheld
Descending o'er a sloping hill amid
The narrow pass of a contiguous vale.
Whence first their joyful host with equal noise
Hail the near tow'rs of Exham, and the sight
Of the wide Pagan camp. Onward the band
Of Amund rolls intrepid, as the waves
Of some broad surge assail a rocky isle,
Driv'n by a storm. Obvious they soon approach
The bright array of their impetuous van,
Whose watchful leaders with surprize discern
So weak a force against their total host
Rashly oppos'd. Delay is none. At once
Rages the furious conflict. Clash broad shields

To shields oppos'd, and flamy falchions blaze
Light'nings around, as wielded vast they roar
On shatter'd arms. Huge battle-axes groan,
Riving the shiver'd mail, and crashing bones.
Dire was the war, as with resistless force
And noise of eager fury and alarm
The English host came on, band after band,
As when the clouds, blown by the swelling winds
Roll in dark heaps along the vaulted sky,
Flashing destructive fires. They whelm the foe,
As some dread whirlpool in unfathom'd seas
With roar of loudest cataracts absorbs
Within its stormy vortex hapless ships
Or roaming whales, which of approaching death
Aware, confound the sea with dismal groans.
Loud was the rage, the roar, as when a storm
Pours o'er the darken'd vales, when Winter bares
The ravag'd hills, and from each shelter'd cot
Tears the low roof, as with infuriate arm
He hurls his tempests forth, impetuous, wild,
Thundering thro' naked woods, and icy caves.
The shatter'd Danes before their torrent course
Or fly dispers'd, or underneath the feet
Of trampling steeds or warriors, hideous death
Unsorrowing meet: nor total quell'd, for lo!
Retiring by circuitous paths, again
The fierce remains of their unconquer'd band,
Unterrified, the last advancing rear
Furious assail, where o'er the loaded cars,
Guarded, the miserable females sat.

And here a victim to infuriate rage
And the relentless sword, certain had fall'n
The monarch's honour'd sister, unretriev'd,
Had not a gallant soldier at the cost
Of his own life her precious ransom paid,
Warding the dreadful onset, singly bold,
Till thitherward by chance Hianfrid led
His band alarm'd, at whose o'ernumber'd view
The satiate Danes retir'd, seeking their camp
With what of their diminish'd force remain'd,
By paths circuitous. The female train,
And chief the monarch's sister, grateful deem
Hianfrid their deliv'rer, tho' no deed
Of worthy valour signaliz'd his arm:
Praise cheaply won, the lot of happy chance.

And now the English host advancing wide
Spreads o'er the champain, whence in prospect full
They view the Danish camp, with glitt'ring arms
Throng'd and conspicuous tents: not distant far
O'er Exham's subject tow'rs. Soon o'er the side
Of a broad shelt'ring hill above the waves
Of the deep-rolling Exe the prudent King
Selects the destin'd station, where his camp
Safest and best may hold his armed pow'rs:
Which chos'n, immediate o'er th' appointed place
Successive pours the whole delighted host,
In broad array, bright-glist'ning to the view,
As a thick tempest of continuous snow
Drives thro' the air oblique, when rising winds

Drift the deep mantle o'er the swelling hills,
Forests, and caves, and plains, and loaded vales,
In undistinguish'd deluge which o'erspreads
In one vast sheet the whole white-glimm'ring land.
Here soon th' impatient army glad dispose
Their stately tents, and round their spacious camp
Dig the wont trench, near whose deep shelving banks
A lofty mound arose; a bulwark vast.
Strong gates at intervals of distance due
Dispart the pond'rous fence, and to the camp
Lead diff'rent ways. These works complete, in view
Of their opposing foes the English host
Ponder new wars, and from their late repulse
Draw prosp'rous omens. All around the King
Surveys their labours, and with cheering voice
Instructs, or aids, their zeal. Reflecting then,
That human toils, or human skill, alone
Command not hop'd success, if heav'n averse,
Unask'd, deny its blessing and its aid,
The meekly pious King his strict command
Issues that all the full-assembled host
Meet on th' adjacent plain, and there to heav'n
Humbly unite in solemn pray'rs, to ask
Its pow'rful blessing on their ready arms.

Rev'rent all hear: immediate thro' the camp
Dispos'd in wide array decorous moves
The vast procession. Borne aloft in air
Wav'd first the princely ensigns, whose bright pomp
Display'd the holy cross, and in each heart

Struck pious veneration. Follow'd next
In sacred train, bishops rever'd and priests
Devote to Christ and his celestial faith.
After whose steps, the bards in honour'd band
Mov'd decent, sweetly hymning as they went
Melodious strains, breathing of peace and heav'n.
Next came the sov'reign King, majestic, tall,
His brows unhelm'd, and o'er his radiant mail
His dark locks waving, as with look compos'd
Graceful he mov'd. Beside his solemn steps
Fair-beaming, mild, with ev'ry charm adorn'd,
Appear'd his blameless wife, in either hand
Leading a blooming infant. Nor apart
His sister mov'd, grateful for life preserv'd.
Them following, in succession long advanc'd
The ducal chiefs, and thanes, and leaders prime
Of all the valiant host, with whom appear'd
In order due arrang'd their beauteous wives,
And babes, the train of youths, the hoary sires,
Whose sole aspect might claim heav'n's fav'ring eye.
Last in due order came th' innum'rous host
Of gallant soldiers, valour in their looks,
England's last hope. Arriv'd the plain, ere long
On a rais'd altar, from afar beheld,
The venerable Asser meek ascends,
And kneels devout; whose high example soon
The total host obeys, and o'er the plain
Bending in solemn adoration, all
Expect his hallow'd pray'r. Nor paus'd delay.
A reverential silence reigns around.

While high above the pleas'd angelic choir
Survey th' affecting scene, and thoughtful mark
The proffer'd orisons. With heav'n-rais'd eye
The pious priest his moving pray'r address'd.

" Almighty King of heav'n and earth, prime source
And end of all things good, at whose command
The heav'nly spheres in beauteous harmony
Continual roll, the sun dispenses day,
The moon her station knows, and at whose word
Each earthly kingdom prospers or decays,
Oh! hear the creatures of thy hand, and bless,
If right we ask, the purpose we intend.
Oh! yield not this fair isle to foreign foes,
Frantic invaders, fierce, denying thee,
War-breathing pagans. Give not our dear homes
To desolating fires, our wives, our babes,
Victims to slaughter, and the merciless sword.
See not thine altars trampled, and in place
Of equal laws, and virtuous industry,
Murder, and famine, and idolatry,
Stalk o'er the blood-drench'd land. Be thou our shield;
Assert our cause; the cause of right, and heav'n.
Under the banners of thy servant King,
Our honour'd leader, guide our armies on
To vict'ry, and from ev'ry ill defend.
Long may he live his great and good designs
Full to accomplish; thro' this favor'd isle
To stablish peace and happiness; to found
Just, equal laws: to strengthen and extend

Her commerce; to promulgate useful arts;
And on eternal base thine altars raise.
Whence under his mild reign Britannia's sons,
Thy favor'd people, mindful of their good,
May live industrious, social, quiet, blest,
The glory and example of the world,
And to their sons transmitting with firm zeal
Blessings like these, may die at last in peace.
Not unprepar'd, but longing with fix'd hope,
For that superior life of bliss in heav'n,
Promis'd to all the good: in sight of thee,
And highest, happiest beings, till all time
Sink on the bosom of Eternity."

He ceas'd: th' attentive heav'nly choir on high
Waft the meek ardor to the throne supreme,
Angelic incense burning on its wings.
And now along the field responsive hymns
Rise, graceful: voices sweet their charming tones
Pour smooth: the harp her mingling work, and flute,
Delicious-breathing, cease not: hollow trump
Or sounding clarion, big with notes of war,
None threat'ning roar, to interrupt the rites
Of meek religion, uttering strains of peace.
Heav'n heard applausive; and each throbbing heart
Was cheer'd with conscious hope.
Now all the air
Breathing of eve, a soft refreshment shed
O'er the dew'd fields; the closing flow'rs distill'd
A richer fragrance, ere extended shades

Hid all their beauties, and on ev'ry bough
Birds warbled music to the sinking sun.
In ready order to the tented camp
Returns the total host. Nor intervenes
Delay, ere as propos'd, humane the King
Sends a prompt mission to the hostile camp,
By gifts of costly price from captive chains
To ransom those brave men, thro' cruel chance
Of battle lost amid the last dire field.
Instant with eager joy from princely tents
Are brought the precious gifts: proud mettled steeds,
Rich armour, polish'd mail, and high-plum'd helms,
Goblets, profuse of gold; vases of glass,
Rare, and of costly frame: huge, glitt'ring swords,
And shields, with many a proud device adorn'd.
To noble Osmund and the trusty chief,
Rayner, the wary sov'reign now commits
Th' important embassy. They in their hands
Bear the white flag of truce, and of their steps
Associate, take two venerable bards
Deck'd with the flowing mantle and the harp,
Ensigns of sacred name, by fiercest tribes
Respected, honouring the pow'r of song.
Attendants bring the gifts in splendid train,
While o'er the spacious champain, from afar
Conspicuous, they proceed, and cross the vale,
And rising heights, till now their steps arrive
The outer confines of the Pagan camp.

V. 779—807.

Which entering, soon amid the thronging Danes,

All eager to survey their train, they pass
And tow'rd the royal tent of Guthrun move
In solemn silence, by a waiting troop
Escorted. On their way aware they mark
Dire preparations for fierce war: of arms
Store unconceiv'd, and spoil: and view surpriz'd
Huge massive altars to the fancied Gods
In honour high up-rear'd. Assail their ears
On ev'ry hand, shouts, and resounding cries,
The yells of fury, while in bands the foe
Swear by their mighty swords, and glitt'ring mail,
Inscrib'd with magic verse, or their tall ships
Or fury-breathing steeds, never to yield,
But dying, strike immedicable wounds.
Then to observe these horrid vows invoke
Odin, thrice terrible, father of death,
God in his hand who bears slaughter and fire,
The chuser of the slain, and stern they swear
To die all sword in hand, not to outlive
Their leaders, but to face thrice equall'd foes.
The Danish chieftains, loud-exulting, part
The spoils of ravag'd England, as tho' now
Total attain'd. Priests of the various Gods
Loud boast by pow'rful arts to raise in air
Storms, or by magic charm out of their graves
To call the slumb'ring dead, and hear from them
The will of fate; to palsy by a word
The warrior's lifted arm, or instant heal
Wounds and disease. So amid noise confus'd
And hideous murmurs thro' the deep-rang'd tents

Proceeds the anxious embassy, till now
Near the wide precincts of the sov'reign's tent
Their steps arrive.

Here scatter'd round appear
The marks of recent sacrifice. The ground
Near a broad altar, crimson'd o'er with blood,
Confus'd was strown with arms, and mangled flesh,
Dreadful to view. Beside the leader's tent
Resplendent banners wav'd, ensigns of state.
Approaching these, and to the sov'reign chief
Announc'd, the thoughtful train expect his will,
When on the earth bending his pensive looks,
Sudden the venerable Osmund starts
Backward, all-pale, aghast, and stands appall'd,
Fix'd as a statue. Lo! before his gaze
Lie the known armour, shield, and crested helm
Of his dear son, defil'd with gore, and hewn
With hideous dints. Amazement seiz'd the band
Attendant near, who recognize alike
The arms of gallant Athelard, oft seen
Moving thro' hostile ranks in fiercest war.
Dismay on ev'ry count'nance sat, that ting'd
Each cheek with pale. Doubts and dark-boding thoughts
In ev'ry breast arise; various, yet all
Ominous of danger, and unutter'd death.
Dismal suspence and terror full-usurp'd
Osmund's kind heart, that ev'ry sense awhile
Absorb'd, till from his stupefactive trance
Recov'ring, silent o'er the neck he hung
Of his near friend, the virtuous Rayner. He

Uttering sweet words of comfort, soft infus'd
The balm of patient hope. Thus occupied,
To them a herald comes, who bids their train
Enter the splendid tent, where seated high
Amid his armed chiefs they see with awe
The sov'reign Guthrun. Blood-stain'd arms around
Frequent were hung, with skulls of warriors slain
In fight, now chang'd to decorated cups
Capacious of bright mead, that 'mid the glare
Of pendent lights shone dismal. In array
Before his presence rang'd, the English band
Display their offer'd gifts, and tho' alarm
At that dread vision, fancied still in view,
Perturb'd each feeling heart, their mission soon
The prudent Rayner opes, with meek act
Soliciting release of those brave men,
Captives by chance of war. Their meek request
Guthrun, attentive, seems to yield, whose voice
Thus heard express'd, imperious Oskital,
Stern-menacing, objects, and calls profane
Release so granted, when the captive band
Should be reserv'd for sacrifice, to please
Expectant Gods; and ere their mangled flesh
Smoke on the altar, each in single fight
Should fall by some bold chief, whence to infer
Sure auguries. His words a train of priests
Thronging around confirm: nor tho' allur'd
At sight of so rich treasure, does the chief
Oskital, fonder still of blood, allow

Their wish'd release. The fierce resolve prevails:
Rejected are the splendid gifts; nor hope
Left ever to redeem the captive band.

This heard with grief, the English chiefs implore
Sight of the hapless men, or ev'n to hear
What warriors eminent this mournful lot
Endure. But ev'n this sad request receives
Denial strange. Sole to partake the feast
Ready at hand, the sadden'd embassy
Finds earnest invitation, nor avails
Excuse. The splendid feast is now prepar'd.
Th' assembled chiefs around the spacious board
In order sit, whose meeting to partake
Kelwulf, sad chief, invited comes. Surprize
And mingled awe gleam'd in his pensive looks,
As entering he beholds his once-lov'd friend,
Rayner, with noble Osmund. Yet to vent
Th' emotions of his soul, the warrior chief
Not dares: for mournful silence check'd his tongue.
Proceeds the full repast. The flesh of deer,
Oxen, and boars, the sumptuous table fills.
In polish'd skulls attendant virgins hand
Delicious mead, metheglin's luscious juice,
And costly wine, while many a flowing cup
The sov'reign Guthrun, rev'rently erect,
Quaffs to the name of Odin, heav'ns high King,
Invoking vict'ry and continual war:
To Thor, all-potent ruler of the air,
Honour is giv'n in plenteous bowls, to win

His favor, seasons fair and genial skies.
To Frea, Queen of heav'n, the num'rous board
Pour the full cup and from her active care,
Mistress of half the slain, mother of grace,
Ask prosp'rous aid in battles and in love.
Mighty Niord, King of the boundless deep,
Copious libation honours, and his name
Sounds frequent. Seated near the royal chief,
High-honour'd bards the magic pow'r of song
Roll thro' the sounding dome, while harps attun'd
Pour full their dulcet harmony. Joy shines
In ev'ry face, save in the pensive looks
Of the forc'd visitants, on whom his gaze
Kenwulph, pale, mournful fix'd, and silent told
Feelings within him of devout regard,
Mingled with secret pain.
Him unremark'd,
Or sole with scarce-check'd insult and contempt
View'd by the haughty Danes, their sov'reign King
Forewarns approaching battle, and reminds
Th' expectant guests that with the custom'd hour
Holy religious rites to fav'ring Gods
Must strait be done. Which signal to depart,
Lest with their presence they profane the scene,
The wary embassy attend. They rise,
Willing dismiss'd. Them to the camp's extreme
Kenwulph indulging earnest, strong desire,
Follows at humble distance, seen of all:
Hangs on their tardy steps, and courts their view.
He longs th' emotions of his swelling heart

Into the bosom of his once-lov'd friend
Secret to pour. Nor less desire impels
The good and feeling Rayner to receive
The near address of his late-honour'd friend,
Struck by his mien, nor of his hapless state
Unconscious. But severer eyes around
Forbade their nearer interview.

Thus pass'd
The fruitless embassy. While now arous'd
For solemn rites th' expectant Danes prepare.
In vast array the crowding legions move
Around the destin'd place; on whose proud height
The magic reafen, tall-uprear'd, gleam'd wide
Amid the glare of lamps. The total host
Dispos'd at length in order'd range, to these
Gorgeous-array'd in robes of purest white
Came forth the holy prophetesses, sprung
Of mighty Kings, and honour'd as divine.
Solemn attention reigns. The sacred train
Fix on the awful sign their lifted gaze,
And thus deliver their enraptur'd mind.

" Peace, ev'ry murmur; ev'ry breath be still;
While heaven's inspired ministers reveal
The future destinies. To us alone
Odin, almighty father, gives to know
The action of all Spirits that animate
Nature thro' all her works. Who, when the winds
Or mountain-caverns roar, or waters lift
Their dark resounding waves, or when the moon

Veils in thick clouds her orb, or when the stars
Enter within their caves, who, then explains
The various will of the controlling spirits
But we alone? How would the battles fail,
The hero's enterprize, his eager voyage,
Were not the will of fate, by us reveal'd!
But heav'n benign, to us vouchsafes t' impart
Plainly all operations of the Fates,
Who, Present, Past, and Future, underneath
The ash that overshadows all the worlds
Sit, weaving ev'ry destiny of man.
The Gods forsake us never, but converse
With us in sleep, or oft in waking trance
Fix our enraptur'd vision on dread scenes
Of dim futurity. To us the pow'r
Belongs by mystic verse out of their graves
To call the slumb'ring dead, whose soul forsakes
Valhalla, or the world of Death, to raise
From its dark home her once companion-frame,
Prompt to disclose each hero's fated doom.
Great God of battles; Mother-Queen of heav'n,
To ye we owe these gifts divine: receive
Our praise devout. Lo! as we speak, and lift
Heav'nward our eyes, amazing visions rise
On our transported sight—We see;—we see;—
Are these your sacred destinies?—Behold!—
The world recedes from our extatic sense.—
Terrific scenes! visions of other times!
All-hail!—Lo! there victorious standards roll
Mid glittering clouds of steely heroes, driv'n

Routed along in swift pursuit.—They fly!—
The English fly.—The red-cross banners fall,
Trampled, defil'd with gore.—Fields swim in blood.— V. 1016—1045
Carcases strew the plains.—The vultures scream,
Flying around, and hungry wolves from far
Pour roaring to the feast of death.—There sails
Odin, the terrible, the whirlwind, borne
In his swift-whirling chariot, as the sun
Brilliant, and vast; all-gold its rapid wheels:—
The eyes, the nostrils of his glaring tygers
Flame light'nings, as they rush along the field,
Where thousands blasted fall.—The clash of arms
Stuns the pierc'd ear.—See! how the Valkyries
Dart ev'ry way, borne on celestial steeds,
Swifter than arrows. Lo! they lift away
Thousands of fallen heroes. Odin fills
His glorious car. Frea, bright goddess, fair
Ev'n as the moon, hastes yonder towards heav'n,
Known by her beamy car. Half of the slain
Already she has chos'n. Gna sails behind,
Bright on her airy courser. Shakes the bridge
Of heav'n, as o'er its strong foundations pass
Th' illustrious train of Gods, chariots, and steeds,
And mailed heroes, entering brilliant realms
Of bliss, where Valhall lifts her palaces.
Vict'ry still loves the Danes. Thousands of foes
Sink to th' abode of Hela. Wolves devour
Their mangled shapes around.—Behind appear
Cities in fiery ruins. Volumes roll
Of lurid smoke, and fill the vaulted skies.—

Gods! what vast scenes of glory rise around!—
Lo! all the Danes throughout the conquer'd land
Reign, masters. See the croucling, trembling slaves
Suppliant for life, for food; their boasted peace,
Their servile laws, their humble, toilsome arts
Extirpate and forgot. Where glitter now
The temples of their vain religion? All
Ras'd and extinct, while in its place the faith
And adoration of our nobler Gods
Prevail o'er all the land. War, slaughter, death,
Stablish'd for ever. Sent by Odin down
From heav'n, eternal Vict'ry smiling hangs
O'er the tall banners of the lordly Danes.
We see no change beyond. Till time's last end
The prospect reaches. Oh! entrancing scenes!
Stay: ever let us view ye: but ev'n now
Receding, heav'n its dark'ning curtain draws
Before our gaze.—The splendors now depart.—
Oh! fellows, warriors, from our tranced lips
Heard you express'd heav'n's future destinies?—
Treasure the sacred truths: be firm, be fierce;
And let your bravery consummate all."

These words the ambient people meek receive
With deepest awe, and on the holy train
Gaze, who exhausted and aghast appear
As from a trance recov'ring. Eager joy
Succeeds, and ardor for th' approaching fight.
With mingling cries the legions call their Gods
To hear their pray'rs: to yield them aid: to hurl

Seem'd such sensation to pervade all hearts,
Yet did not all; all save the vainer thane
Hianfrid; he, doubting and restless, thought
On honours hard to be attain'd in war,
And cheaper won by yielding to the foe.
So witness'd Kenwulph's favor, who now reign'd
Sov'reign of Mercia's realms, of late a chief
Subject to Alfred's sway. These secret thoughts
Brooding within his heart, he could forget
The monarch's kinder favor, grateful shewn
For the repute of his lov'd sister, sav'd,
Nor felt the glow of zeal, panting for fame.
Wan'd now the hours of eve; all o'er the earth
Night overhung her canopy of shades.
To rest the host retires, ardent to hail
The purple light of morning: while aloft
Wand'ring on ev'ry hand th' angelic train
Move o'er each peaceful-tent, by cheering dreams
Soothing the slumbers of th' impatient host.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK VIII.

Morning. Meeting of the armies. A single combat of two of the chiefs. General battle of the English and Danes. Exploits of various heroes. The English are victorious, but their pursuit of the enemy is prevented by a storm excited by the Demons, who appear in the shapes and ensigns of the Danish Gods. The angels counteract in some degree their delusive agency. Osmund discovers his son. Return of the English to their camp, and festivities there. Alfred determines to ask a truce for burying the dead. Transactions of the Danes. Observing the effect of their illusion, the Demons resolve to display to Guthrun on some future occasion a more full vision of the Pagan beliefs. Night.

ALFRED.

BOOK VIII.

V. 1—19

SCARCE had the morning star his earliest beams
Shot o'er the dawning east, ere from their tents,
O'er all the camp the English legions mov'd,
Vig'rous, and cheer'd with happiest presages.
Amid the throng the chieftains pass, and range
Their warriors for prompt march.
The royal chief
Delay'd not long, but from his tented dome
Issued, array'd in splendid arms; yet first
Prest on Elsweda's lips a tender kiss,
And held her hand. Tears o'er her blooming cheeks
Roll'd silent, and emotion swell'd her heart,
For on her parting spouse she knew devolve
England's last hope.
He to his various stand
Came ardent, and th' embodied host survey'd
Under their banners marshall'd: which full soon
He, bounding on his eager steed, led on
With far-resounding voice in vast array.

Standards innumerable waving shine
O'er the throng'd nations, which the banded pow'rs
Distinguish, as they move in squadrons dense
United; steeds succeeding barbed steeds
To distance infinite; while dazzling spears,
And plumed helms, and shields, like one vast sea,
Blaze as with fire, flashing o'er all the land.
Clarions and trumpets, uttering martial noise,
Echo o'er heav'n, and swell the neigh of steeds
And choral strains of bards in ev'ry band
Raising the songs of war. They move along,
Numberless as the leaves that on the boughs
Wave of some ancient forest, when the breeze
Shakes from their surface the collected rains.
With pow'r they rush, as torrents from the hills
Pour roaring o'er the vales, that whelm along
In their resistless course the woods and rocks,
When all the rivers. surging o'er their banks
Deluge the land. Nor less the mingling noise,
The terror of their near approach, than when,
Clouds heap'd on clouds amid the loaded air,
Horrible tempests burst, that all the sky,
Illumin'd with unceasing flashes, reels
With storming rains and thunders.
England's King
Borne in the van upon his conscious steed
Intrepid moves: and oft looks back to view
Th' embattled legions, while undaunted hope
Swells in his heart and joy, that now at last
Has come that hour when all her miseries past

His country shall avenge and end her woes.
Yet damps that joy a thought that ere the night
Death in his cold embrace so many brave
Shall press on glory's bed. Thus occupied
On lofty thoughts, around him throng his chiefs,
As when along the east the glitt'ring clouds
Crowd round the rising sun, what time his rays
Crimson the placid ocean, and the earth
Smiles in morn's fresh'ning glow. So pass'd the host;
Deeming by prompt attack and feign'd retreat
Forth from their camp t' elude the Danish foe,
Till on the open champain they may wage
More equal battle. But no such pretext
Th' impetuous foe allows, who now aware,
Furious comes pouring o'er the ravag'd plains
To meet their long-expected march. All tents
Vacant gave up their habitants to urge
Or witness deeds of death. Shouting they come,
Clashing their shields, invoking warlike Gods,
Disorder'd, that from far the region round
Resounds, as wide their hideous bands advance,
As when a herd of lions o'er the wilds
Of Afric thro' the night terrific rage
When on the wind their hollow thunders borne
Alarm the land and fires ascend to heav'n.
Fierce-panting for the fight they rush t' oppose
The English host, and glut their swords in blood;
As when a flock of vultures in the wind
Sagacious snuff the scent of death, and wing
Exulting their aërial way from far

O'er lofty mountains and deep vales, until
They reach the plains bestrown with dead, and gorge
Their hungry beaks in flesh.

Nor long their course,
Ere obvious they discern the English pow'rs,
Rang'd all in broad array of awful front,
Where band on band, far-glitt'ring on the view,
Stood firm as tow'rs: uplifted on the sight,
As where in sacred Fohi's empire old
Pekin's huge wall o'er steepest mountains rears
Its giant bulk: then down the lowest vales
Erects its pyramids, whose strength defends
Mandarins, Bramins, Lamas, and the wealth
Of thousand stately cities, from a foe
Trooping from barren wilds to gain thro' blood
Riches long-stor'd, and whelm disputed thrones.

Them opposite, the Danish legions soon
In wide battalion stood, ranging their pow'rs,
Spearmen and archers, steeds, and mailed ranks,
And mighty chiefs, in savage raiment hid,
That to th' astonish'd eye the host might seem
Impenetrable, dazzling, as appear'd
The mountainous barrier of solid ice
Shielding the northern pole, to the dash'd gaze
Of mariners when to explore new worlds
They urge their daring prows, and from the mast
Far-stretching see, amaz'd, tremendous isles,
Indissoluble, cragg'd with frozen rocks.

Thus stood awhile the adverse hosts, and gaz'd
Fierce on each other in terrific silence,
When ere the clarions in th' uplifted hands
Blew the loud sound of onset, lo! between
Both armies, follow'd by a train of chiefs,
Imperial Oskital conspicuous came
And from his high-careering steed with voice
Audacious thus the English host defied. V. 108—134.

"Which of the English chiefs, ere joins the storm
Of battle, dares with Oskital contend?
If any, come he forth: that I may give
His body to the waiting wolves, and tear
His crest presumptuous from his corse, to form
Of his riv'n skull a polish'd drinking cup,
Whence I may quaff rich mead to fav'ring Gods."

Him glorying thus the generous Alwin heard
Indignant, and in front advancing bold
His royal chief address'd. "No English heart
Can fear yon boaster! I appear, and glad
Accept his challenge, under hope my arm
Shall teach his humbled pride and all yon host,
The pow'r of valour in the cause of right."

So saying, and from his sov'reign pleas'd assent
Obtaining, with a band select of bards
And noble thanes, witnesses of the fight,
Proud he went forth, and on his prancing steed
Met his insulting foe, to whom no pause

His ardent courage yielded for delay
Of further speech: but ere the trumpet ceas'd
The signal of assault, his flamy spear
Poising, he urg'd his plumed steed, and drove
Full on th' expectant Dane. He firm receiv'd
Th' impetuous onset, and with like career
Rush'd on his fierce opponent, who that shock
On the broad orb of his wide-blazing shield
Sustain'd unhurt. Soon both receding flew
More furious on each other; loudly rang
Their hollow shields, together dash'd; or smote
Incessant by their massive spears, that oft
Wielded on high, upon the shiver'd crest
Descend tempestuous, till the English chief
Lifts in his mighty arm a fragment riv'n
Of his unequal lance. Which seen, at once
Fiercer his foe springs on him, fir'd with hope
To verify his vaunt: his aim perceiv'd
Alwin eludes, and instant from his side
Drawn, waves aloft his flaming sword: in vain
The ruthless Oskital his murderous rage
Vents on his adversary, and his blows
On blows reiterate, wasting all his strength,
Pours vehement o'er helm, and shield, and mail.
For soon th' intrepid Alwin well prevents
The meditated ruin: forward sprung,
He marks a guardless moment, and the force
Of his huge falchion on his foeman's casque
Dashes precipitate: the pond'rous blow
Unhors'd th' infuriate Dane: bleeding he falls

V. 135—164.

With clamour. But not then the generous chief
Tramples his prostrate enemy, but strait
Down leaps from his proud steed, and on the ground
Seizing the haughty Pagan, to his feet
Uplifts him, and his grasp maintaining firm,
Deals not less deadly blows, instant return'd
By his recover'd foe. Such seem'd the fight
As when in Indian wilds a serpent huge,
Provok'd by other roaming monster, starts
Aloft, and instant round the guardless foe
Enwreathes his spotted folds, whose stifling weight
Crushes with violent grasp the yielding bones:
Roaring in anguish then, th' enormous beast
Lion or Leopard, in his foamy jaws
Seizes th' incumbent death. The desarts hear
Yells and loud hisses load the shudd'ring air.

So dreadful seem'd this fray, till on the ground
Prostrate th' enormous Pagan groaning lies,
While from his wounded side a sanguine stream
Flows fast. Around him throng his wond'ring band
To save their chief. He terrible and vast
Seem'd to the fixed gaze, as when a whale
Perceives his bulk assail'd by hostile spears,
And downward rolls, tossing in agony,
With stormy rage, until ascending soon
From his huge nostrils he upsends aloft
Torrents of blood, wide-redd'ning the green sea.

Such seem'd the mighty warrior, ere his chiefs

From that fierce conflict bore him to his lines,
All-pale and faint: while to his eager bands
Alwin return'd, and near advancing, call'd
For instant onset.
Nor the royal chief
Delay'd the dread assault, but while the sound
Roll'd of unnumber'd trumpets thro' the air,
The English pow'rs in dark battalion mov'd
Onward from end to end. Horrible joins
The shock of battle on th' opposing host,
And loud the cry of warriors, as they meet
Their foes in fight; with sound no less and pow'r,
Than waves of some tumultuous vaulty sea,
Sailing in lofty over-arching surge
Upon the broad side of a rocky isle,
That totters to its base, with all its towns
And woods, and hills. Fierce rag'd the clash of arms;
Shields dash'd on shields: hauberk, and mail, and spear
Commingling rang. Men press'd on men. Swords blaze
Terrible flames, as on the crashing helms
They fall, tempestuous. Steeds with armed breast
Meet steeds, till gor'd with ghastly wounds, they sink
In agony. Confusion, leagued with death,
Reigns universal. Thousands trampled fall
Thro' either host, and blood in torrents rolls.
Such was the conflict of the adverse hosts,
As when beside the pole, if rising storms
Afflict the sea, enormous fields of ice
Opposite-moving on each other dash
In hideous tumult: shatter'd mountains fall
Ruinous on ev'ry side, and thousand isles

Roll separated thro' the raging waves.
O'er all the heav'n a night of weapons hung,
Flying in iron storm: barb'd arrows sang
Frantic for blood: red-gleaming jav'lins sped,
Like light'nings thro' the air, with pond'rous force
Slaught'ring where'er they fell. The deathful clang
Resounding thro' heav'n's vault scarce left the ear
Discernment of the clarions' roar, or shouts
Victorious of pursuing bands, or groans
Of fallen ranks. Yet audible were cries
Of Danes, invoking to their side the Gods
Of battle, whose prompt aid they ask to send
A thousand foes to Hela, and to lift
Themselves to Valhall's palaces. The songs
Of bards in either host confus'd with noise
Of instruments swell'd sad the cries of death,
As fiercer grew the conflict, and the earth
Trembled beneath the press of charging steeds,
And trampling legions, and huge heaps of slain.
The glitter, tumult, roar of fighting hosts
Seem'd (if with earthly scene they hold compare)
As when at dead of night from murky clouds
Incumbent on the Alps, broad light'nings flash
Continuous glaring; and the heav'n-wide thunder
Round their horizon rolling slow, at last
Peals thro' the vales profound, and hollow caves,
Alone a prelude to the warn'd approach
Of bursting earthquakes, which the mountainous range
Shake from their dark foundations, and down hurl,
Loosen'd precipitate from skyey heights,

Fields of conglomerated snow and ice,
That whelming forests, bridges, caverns, tow'rs
With formless ruins fill the bury'd vales.
With such confused terrors flam'd, rag'd, fell,
The battle. Havoc unappeas'd proceeds.
Numberless was the slaughter. Many a chief
Of noblest birth lay gasping on the ground,
Mingled with throngs of low degree. With ire
Ungovernable swells the deepen'd fight,
Furious alike, where'er the course might turn,
Yet seem'd it most to storm, where 'mid the van
Guthrun undaunted fought, and thro' the ranks
Impetuous driving on his gory steed,
Came as in Eastern wars advances huge
The tow'red elephant, who thro' a host
Of prostrate foes invulnerable moves,
While nations tremble at his single view.

Around their monarch contest fierce arose
Of noblest warriors, burning to partake
Dangers and death: while as they proudly fought,
From ev'ry mouth resounded high the strains
Of martial song; their fathers' sainted fame,
Or their own stern resolves smiling to die
Amid the gory battle, sword in hand.
Shouting they cry that Odin to the war
Descended, even now with Frea joins
And the swift host of Valkyries to chuse
The fallen brave, and on their glitt'ring cars
Bear them to heav'n's bright halls. Here chief each host

For mast'ry strove, while fast on either side
Ranks mingling fell Raging with mighty arm
Among the English host dire Frena, chief
Of many warlike pow'rs, dealt hideous death.
Dark o'er the plain the wounded warriors lay
With riven limbs, as when tempestuous fires
Have seiz'd some ancient forest, elms or oaks;
Stretch'd o'er the side of some extended hill
Their blacken'd trunks remain, tho' all their boughs
Flames have devour'd. Whom in his mid career
Of slaughter Devon's duke beheld, and stern
Advancing, thus address'd.

"Insatiate, hold
Thy murd'rous hand, and with an equal foe
Contend, who boasts him born of princely line,
Proud as thine own, but of less savage soul:
For never thee woman with human breast
Nurtur'd, but in some forest or deep den
A wolf has suckled with her horrent dugs.
So fell and dark is thy malignant rage."

To whom the Danish chief. "I know thee well,
Oddune, in battle fam'd; and high my soul
Swells with delight that to my arm at last
Odin has sent thee. Me thine equal call
Never, but thy superior own, as now
Thy fate, ere we two part, shall amply prove.
Assist me, mighty Tyr, thou God renown'd
In single fight. And thou, fair Queen of heav'n,
Stand at my side, and range thy splendid host

Of Valkyries to view me instant send
To Hela's dismal world this dreaming wretch."

V. 318—339.

Nor longer held they parley, but at once
Each on the other sprang: their foaming steeds
Shock'd dreadful, breast on breast: while high uprear'd
Their mingling limbs entwin'd, as o'er the field
Echoed the thunder of the fighting chiefs,
Armour on armour clashing, but not long
Endur'd their fierce encounter, for the spear
Of Oddune, driven by his furious arm,
Dash'd thro' his adversary's shield and mail,
Piercing his breast. Reeling he fell with noise,
Impetuous: and on earth essay'd in vain
To draw th' inherent weapon. Ghastly smiles
Complacent o'er his visage flew, and gleams
Of transient lustre fir'd his closing eyes,
While thus his falt'ring voice his hopes express'd.

"Joyful I die: I go to Odin's halls,
Borne on his shining car. I shall advance
Thro' Valhall's palaces with numerous pomp
Of steeds and warriors in my service slain,
Array'd in rich attire. Chiefs, slain of old,
Will on my entrance from their glitt'ring seats
In honour rise. Gods shall with pride admire
The gorgeous spectacle. Friends, fear not death:
Die with your chief. Save but my bleeding corse.
With it my war-horse bury and my arms.
See! high I grasp my sword—I die—I die."

Nor did not his fierce band the dying words
Observe of their proud chief, but thronging round
Tumultuous, from his corse the English host
Immediate drove: while near him, ere his breath
Forsook his pallid lips, his eager bards
Struck to his fame the sounding harps, and sung.

" Farewell, great Frena, happy in thy death,
As in thy life unequall'd: henceforth lives
Thy name in song. Boundless shall be thy fame,
Like the vast Ash that overspreads all worlds,
Rooted in hell, whose mingling branches hang
O'er heav'n and earth. Thou go'st to Odin's halls,
And shalt be rang'd with Heroes to enjoy
Battles and feasts, till that tremendous day
When Heimdal on the rainbow's top shall blow
From his terrific trumpet a vast roar
Rolling amid creation to convene
Th' alarmed Gods: while from th' abyss beneath
Surtur shall lead his blazing hosts, and all
The miscreated monsters, nature's foes,
Shall burst their chains, and sally thro' mid heav'n.
Then Odin thee shall mark with conscious joy
And call thee to his side, when Gods around
Fly in confusion. Nor thy glory ends,
Tho' heav'n and earth predestin'd fires consume,
When Gods shall yield to fate. Gimlé remains,
Seat of the blest, where thro' eternal time
Thy mighty soul shall commune with the brave."

Scarce ceas'd the song, ere ranging thro' the fight
The sov'reign Guthrun to the spot advanc'd,
Fury conspicuous in his eyes. Aghast
He started back, so sudden to behold
Lifeless extended on the ground a chief
Far-fam'd in war. Instant his panting steed
He quitted, and the dead man's clay-cold hand
Grasping with sighs, his friend thus fond address'd.

"Do I then lose thee, Frena, of my chiefs
Bravest and best? matchless in manly arts,
Whether to guide the fiery steed, or dart
With pow'r th' unerring spear, or o'er the sea
Steer sure thy star-led course. But oh! I see
Glory yet claims thy soul. I see thy sword
Gleam in thy blood-stain'd hand. What fate awaits
The envied brave, but in the battle's roar
To fall, transpierc'd with wounds, while wond'ring Gods
Look on, and Odin in his brilliant car
Stands ready to receive the parting soul,
And o'er the green worlds waft it to the skies?
Thee ev'ry dame shall mourn, who sole the brave
Love and revere. In ev'ry song the bards
Shall chaunt thy name. And never shall my heart
Thy worth forget, but emulate thy deeds.
Yet unaveng'd thy death shall never be.
Lead on, ye captains, in the gory fight
Slaughter shall tell our grief for Frena lost."

So said, he on his ardent war-horse sprung

And led th' impatient squadrons where the fight
Rag'd fiercest. From before their dreadful course
The English bands retir'd, for deep dismay
Sudden o'erpow'r'd their hearts, such carnage round
Amaz'd their view, dealt by the frenzied arms
Of multitudes, impell'd by dark revenge.
In vain their animating song the bards
Pour thro' the English troops. Hianfrid flies,
Terrified, and his steps full many, seiz'd
With sympathetic terror, swift pursue.
Yet join not all their flight, nor without cost
Of many a gallant life this sad default
Escapes. And ah! lamented fate, as bold
He rush'd th' assailants' fury to withstand,
The gallant Berthun fell; a youthful thane
Of noblest promise, by his num'rous band
And by his sov'reign lov'd. Dreadful he came
On his gore-spotted steed, wielding his spear
With mighty arm, by his selected troops
Follow'd, who aim'd sole to oppose the wrath
Of Frena's train, by Guthrun now led on,
Join'd too by Sidroc, and the martial host
Of Amund, kingly chief. Whom, as they pass'd
Resistless thro' the battle, soon perceiv'd
Berthun the brave, and to their triple pow'rs
Successfully awhile oppos'd the force
Of his intrepid band.

Check'd was the course
Of the proud-raging Pagans, till aware
Of his desired prey from mid the host

Fierce Amund sprang, all-arm'd in brass, and swift
As light'ning, while the youth with numbers fought,
Hurl'd on his sounding helm the pond'rous weight
Of his huge falchion. Down the hero fell,
Riv'n thro' the brain. Sleep overcast his eyes.
Full many a tear his early fate shall mourn
Where on the woody side of Axham's vale
His pleasant dwelling stands. In vain shall look
At dawn or eve his tender wife to hail
His glad return, but hopeless to her heart
Press his fair image in her smiling babe.
He fell, as by some murm'ring riv'let's side
The tow'ring poplar, whose broad branches shade
A rural cottage, guardian of its peace,
Sinks crashing, and up-tears the flow'ry bank,
Whelm'd by the tempest; the defenceless cot
Howls to the moaning wind: the birds behold
Their nests, their young, in ruin lost: the brook
Rolls o'er the tree whose image long it lov'd.

V. 426—454.

For Berthun slain a gen'ral grief arose
Throughout the English bands. Nor of his fate
Was fame th' unwelcome tidings to proclaim
Tardy: which soon the English monarch's ear
Caught, where amid the battle's distant roar
Dauntless he fought. Provok'd, and to the soul
Deep-mov'd with noble rage and keen regret,
Dreadful he issued from conflicting bands,
And loudly summoning his trusty chiefs
Rush'd to that scene of death. The noise of war

Was at his presence hush'd. Awful he came,
As the grim monarch of the forest wilds,
Who lodg'd at midnight in his den, if dark
Hurricanes sweep along the thund'ring air,
Awakes; roll'd downward in tumultuous ruin,
Rocks crash, and suddenly hot light'ning-fires
Invade the secrets of his blood-stain'd cave:
Then his red eye-balls glaring blaze: he stalks
Howling to open air, with sulph'rous flames
Luridly bright, and with astounding roars
Mocks the dread thunder and o'er awes the storm.
With heart'ning voice th' indignant sov'reign cheers
The dubious bands and to his side invokes
Osmund, and Oddune, Alwin, and the young
Edgar, and many a thane who near them fought.
His look inspir'd fresh courage, and each heart
Throbb'd high with ardour to renew the fight;
Rush tow'rd the gallant King innumerous bands:
The summon'd chieftains at the monarch's side
Appear, and to their diff'rent stations haste,
As he directs, and soon behind the shade
Of the broad kingly banner leading on
Where deadliest rag'd the battle, move conjunct
Indissoluble hosts. Nor obvious stood
Th' astonish'd Danes. Flight and disorder'd rout
Turn'd their o'erwhelmed pow'rs: while slaughter rag'd
Ineffably obscene and furious. Now
Resistance none they dare, but fly dismay'd.
O'er all the field amid the Danish host
Confusion reigns. Innumerable fate

Despoils their legions. Hideous swells the din
And storm of triumph beyond mortal thought;
Nor seem'd the dread turmoil to cease, but still
As ev'ning o'er the clouded skies drew on
Her gradual shades, warning th' approach of night,
More fierce the carnage grew. Heav'n with the roar
Resounded, and the champain swam with blood.
The English monarch thro' the central van
Pierc'd of the Danish host. They routed fly
On ev'ry hand, by equal pow'rs pursued,
And leave the field bestrown with banners, drench'd
In blood, and helms, and spears, and shatter'd mail,
Red-gleaming in the parting rays of eve.

Harrow'd with anguish at that fatal sight
And torn with rage to mark their favor'd Danes
Driv'n from the field of death, th' infernal pow'rs
Hov'ring aloft in air, their ponder'd thought
Prepare to execute, nor longer stay
Their needful aid to Guthrun and his host.
Sailing o'er all the heav'n on cloudy wings
Forthwith from stores mysterious they infuse
Darkness into the spongy air, and breathe
Mists of grim influence from their viewless heights.
Sudden-descending over all the sky,
Clouds, heap'd on clouds by rising gusts, obscure
The straining gaze: and rapid night involves
The total landscape. In vain the English pow'rs
Seek their distracted way, such sable gloom
Prevents the sight. Slackens the hot pursuit.

The conscious angel-bands their arts apply
To quell the premature inroad of night,
Wafted from wings of hell: but these renew
Their hideous exhalations, nor the skill
Fear of heav'n's blessed sons, unus'd to arts
So dire. Nor rest they here: but strait prepare
Illusions bolder, higher, big with guile
Of subtler import. Lo! before the path
Of Guthrun and his host, as from the field
Retiring they avoided final rout,
Gradual disclos'd to view, from mid the womb
Of darkness, issued a majestic form
All-arm'd in gold, with hauberk huge and spear.
Around his lofty brows a helmed crown
Blaz'd radiance, brighter than the beams of noon.
His mighty arm upheld on high a shield
Of gorgeous frame. Sublime he stood, and lean'd
O'er a refulgent car, whose hollow arch
Construct of burnish'd steel, glitt'ring as gems,
Held in its ample vault in splendid heaps
Squadrons of bleeding dead, their crimson swords
Grasp'd in their mailed hands. In shadowy train
Around the car, which glaring tygers drew,
Stood rang'd celestial essences on steeds,
Sprinkled with blood, and pois'd on fiery wings.
Lo! on the left a certain Goddess form
Sat in her beamy car, retir'd: her mien
Matchless in beauty, yet with look severe,
Spoke her the Queen of heav'n. Fatigue might seem
Apparent in her air, as late return'd

From scenes of carnage, where her destin'd right
To half the slaughter'd brave she sped to claim.
Amazement seiz'd the Pagan host: their shouts
Tumultuous rise to heav'n, as all the God
Recognize, and to heav'n's great King they sound
Clamorous exult with voice and strucken shields.
Then hush'd in wonder, solemn silence reigns;
Save where beyond amid the final rear
The clash of armour from pursuing bands
Sails on the sullen wings of sablest night.
Rearing his giant-form, the warrior God
Tow'rd the mid van inclin'd his awful eye.
Where stood th' imperial chief, and seem'd in act
To speak, nor long his mighty voice delay'd
Terrible exclamation.

" Warriors brave,
And thou, bold King, forbear dismay: compose
Your all-disorder'd legions, nor disdain
Retreat. I none accuse; but rest content
With the past slaughter. My capacious car,
And the broad equipage of my fair Queen
Already groan beneath a load of slain.
Solicit not your thoughts now to prolong
This work of death: lest your insatiate foes,
Triumphant with new aids, of vict'ry boast
Unmerited. Chief now your efforts blend
Best to retire from battle, and regain
The living ranks, that for renew'd attacks
More prosp'rous you may save your weary pow'rs.
Meanwhile my aid shall hinder the pursuit

Of your insulting foes. I will invoke
Thor, mighty ruler of the air, to ope
His vast-resounding halls, and on their host
Pour instant a destructive storm, which ye
Strait shall behold, but shall unhurt escape."

So saying, he his radiant form outstretch'd
Deep on a sable cloud, and high upborne,
Extended o'er the sky his flamy spear,
That seem'd a comet or the trailing blaze
Of some huge meteor. Then with thund'rous roar
Of his exerted voice, shouting he call'd
On Thor, his eldest born, predestin'd King
Of the wide airy regions: and him bade
Uncloud his halls magnificent, and forth
Display to sight their heav'nly pomp: nor cease
From their original palaces to pour
Storms of unwonted thunder, fires, and rains,
And blasting hails, and hurricanes, to whelm
Legions of foes pursuing, but the Danes
Protect with shadowy covert from their aim.
Immediate at command, all heav'n disrob'd
Of darkness to the dazzled gaze unfolds
Thrudwanger's palaces, the domes superb
Of mightiest Thor. Innumerable halls
Various in aspect, flaming-bright, or veil'd
In rolling vapours, to th' amazed sense
Betoken'd pow'r, magnificence, and state
Transcendently immense. Some might appear
The dwellings of the thunder, some th' abodes

Of gloomy tempests; others might be deem'd
The hollow caves of winds, or fiery-red
The chambers where the light'nings hid their stores.
Yet all by lofty columns were distinct
Of golden frame, brilliant as suns, that rais'd
Domes silver-roof'd, with various stars inlaid,
Within and o'er whose azure-tincted poinp
Clouds floating play'd. Majestic was the view,
Where'er the eye o'er all heav'n's open'd vault
Could stretch its wond'ring gaze. Far in the midst,
Within his awful palace sat august
Upon his burning throne unconquer'd Thor,
Cloth'd in his belt of pow'r, and in his hand
He stay'd his iron mace, a mighty frame,
With which he tames the hideous habitants
Who range th' abyss of air, and those huge shapes
That dwell in fiery Surtur's giant worlds.
A cloud-compelling chariot near him stood,
By four swift beings drawn. Awful he rose,
And mounting his broad seat, gave loose the reins
To their impetuous fury. His swift touch
Opens on ev'ry side the sounding doors
Or dark-expanding gates of thousand halls:
Whence all-invisible the roaring thunder
Vollies thro' scatter'd clouds. Red light'nings fly
Fork'd, or in ardent globes, o'er all the heav'n.
Winds rush tempestuous down with deaf'ning noise;
And streaming rains, and hails, commix'd, descend
In solid deluges. Trembles the earth.
Thor's palaces with vivid splendors shine,

V. 609—632.

Of meteor-fires. Resound their hollow roofs,
And caves profound: their lofty pillars shake,
While Thor tremendous-sailing thro' the maze
Of his wide mansions his hot wrath explodes.
Fury and desolation fill the air.
As bidden by the sire omnipotent,
The conscious God th' obedient tempest darts
Sole on th' astonish'd English, from whose view
He veils the brilliant pomp, and seems a night
Of gloomy horror. But the routed Danes
He covers with a silv'ry cloud, of pow'r
To ward the dreadful vollied hurricane,
Unpierc'd. Transparent still, that these behold
The vengeful God exulting in his might,
And witness all his rage. Astonishment
Palsied their sense, as gazing toward heav'n
They stood like statues.
Nor less wonder seiz'd
The angel host such complicated pow'r
Of dread illusion to behold reveal'd
By the fierce sons of darkness. Yet to aid
The English legions their immediate thought
Arose, and to prevent their smallest view
Of the terrific vision, they expand
A misty veil obscure, whose denser folds
Scarce serv'd to shield the light'ning's flaming wrath
Or the full thunder's pealing continents.

Dishearten'd, and by darkness and the rage
Of the conflicting storm confus'd and turn'd,

Most their collected pow'rs for swift retreat
Prepare, and cease pursuit. Th' angelic pow'rs
Restore at length the dewy light of eve,
And dissipated now th' unnat'ral gloom,
A genial twilight cheers the murky air,
Illumining afar th' embattled scene;
Till the receding vision onward leads
The swift-obeisant Danes.
Them on the left
Where their last phalanx ended, Osmund drove
Unwearied, and by beaming light consol'd:
Nor ceas'd the long pursuit, till near the verge
Of their extended camp his pow'rs arriv'd.
There, whether by some watchful angel led,
Or happy chance, the gen'rous chieftain spies,
Close on the outskirt of the tented field,
A band of armed Danes pursuing swift
One unarm'd man, whom a deep-clanging chain
That from him hung bespoke some captive friend
In pristine battle lost. Compassion sprung
Immediate in his heart, and noble rage;
That instant to the flying man's relief
He sallies on his rapid steed: and soon
Dealing destruction from his light'ning sword,
Scatters th' unequal crew: whom fled, he speeds
T' accost their meditated prey. Ah! then,
What words can paint the noble warrior's look,
When in the hapless fugitive he knew,
(Spite of the wounds that stain'd his face with gore,)
His own lost son. Down from his steed he sprung,

And in his arms the miserable youth
Embracing fond, hung o'er him. On the neck
Each of the other sank, with joy o'erpow'r'd,
And throbbing painful extacy, too full
For words to utter. Silence lent to each
Pause for most dear affection to express
Rapture ineffable of either heart.
Swift to the aid of their lov'd chief had come
His valiant band, when all with mute surprize
Witnessing this endearing scene remain'd
Tenderly fix'd in meekest awe. The face
Of many a vet'ran warrior, brown with toils,
Relax'd to gentle pity, till a tear
Roll'd o'er his manly cheek, and ev'ry heart
Felt the warm glow of sympathetic joy.
Greatly were all delighted to regain
The gallant Athelard, in war renown'd,
And to his sov'reign dear. Fervent they press
Around him, longing from his lips to hear
The full relation of his dangers past.
Nor to their anxious questions does he stay
Full answer, telling that the lot of war
Doom'd him a captive in that dreadful fight
By Wareham's walls: that with the Danish host
Led hitherward, the blood-delighting priests,
Of warlike Gods, selected him to wage
Combat with savage chiefs, whence to infer
Auguries for th' ensuing fight: and when
Victorious in each tournament, he left
No hope of prosp'rous battle for the Danes;

Their fierce revenge had doom'd that with the dawn
His wounded body, of his armour stript,
And bound in chains, should on the altar smoke
A sacrifice to Odin, which foul fate
He now, thro' aid of heav'n, by flight escap'd.—
All struck with dumb amaze the dreadful tale
Listen, and soon the galling chain remove
From his broad limbs. Then on a warlike steed
Springs the recover'd chief, and proud beside
His noble father rides, in mutual joy
Lost, and surprize.
All tow'rd the friendly camp
Return elate. There now the English bands,
Collected, their diminish'd pow'rs dispos'd
Thro' the throng'd tents. His care to yield around
The gen'rous sov'reign passes; tender soothes
The wounded warriors: their heroic deeds
Applauds: relieves their pain: with promise glad
Exalts the hopes of all, and to high sense
Rouses of future glory. Thro' the camp
Now fame arose of Osmund's train return'd
And Athelard regain'd, living and safe.
The youth, in fight distinguish'd, to each heart
Was dear. The happy father, and the son
Late mourn'd as lost, thus all-unhop'd restor'd,
Th' impatient monarch soon accosts. Delight
Throbb'd equal in his heart, and greetings glad
Deceive the time. Oft ask'd, the youth repeats
His strange adventures. In the sight of all
The grateful monarch to the new-won chief

Presents a full array of armour, rich
With gold, emboss'd with many a gem; and adds
A proud-rein'd steed, terrific in the fight,
Royally deck'd.
V. 752—781.

Proud triumph thro' the camp
Reigns gen'ral. At the festive regal board
Appear th' assembled chiefs, and sacred priests,
Bards, and the honor'd female train. Beside
The monarch on each hand was plac'd, as wont,
A favor'd minstrel, prompt to sound the fame
Of noble deeds. Gladly the King dispens'd
The plenteous feast around, whom opposite
His lovely consort sat. She ev'ry eye
Pleas'd by her gentle acts, as she inspir'd
Gay mirth around, proving how charms the heart
Beauty with affable endearment join'd.
Such the mild grace of her engaging mien,
As when in spring the modest hawthorn scents
The joyous air with fragrance, and delights
Th' admiring eye with her white chaplet, spread
Soft o'er her robe of green. Fair virgins bear
To ev'ry chief delicious mead, and wine
Of costly growth, and add approving smiles,
Valour's dear guerdon. Choral bards begin
High songs of war, and in resounding lays
Celebrate chiefs of nobler name. Thy deeds,
Bold Alwin, roll'd in lofty strains. Nor praise
Was silent to the name of Oddune, great
In fight; nor Osmund, brave, benevolent:
Nor Edgar, premature in manly pow'r:

Nor Harold, gallant and high-soul'd: nor thee,
Lov'd Athelard, the answering harp declin'd
To sound with swelling pomp, while it attun'd
Thy acts and hard escapes. In ev'ry song
Echoed the name of Alfred, great in war,
As on the throne of peace. To ev'ry chief
The conscious monarch honour due ascribes.
Hianfrid gently he reproves, whose flight
All-sudden on the dang'rous edge of war
Fatal events induc'd. The vainer youth
Gloomily sat; he yet his name in song
Heard not and this reproof to his dark rage
Added new stings.
The thoughtful sov'reign now
Opes to the full assembly his intent
By early dawn an embassy to send
Intreating from the hostile camp a truce
Of battle, while sepulchral rites are paid
To the fall'n dead. To his instruction high
Anticipating England's future state
When victory shall thro' her realm diffuse
Desired peace, each heart beats proud assent,
And longs for days of preconcerted glory.
So wan'd their hours.
Nor less amid the Danes
Reigns glad festivity. Amaze usurps
Each throbbing breast with memory of the scene
Beheld in heav'n. Extatic fervor swells
Their thoughts to loftiest hope, and joy in aid
Of present Deities. The raptur'd bards

V. 782—811.

Resound the praise of Odin, and the Queen
Of Valhall's glories, and insatiate lust
Awake of carnage. Thousand vows are heard
On ev'ry hand, amid the next hot fight
To die transfix'd with wounds, when the tir'd arm
Has sent to Hela's realms unnumber'd foes.
This savage rage the demon pow'rs perceive
Where on their secret flight they hang on high,
Observing what effect Satanic arts,
Unfolded, on the Danish spirits raise;
Nor now unanswer'd seems their fondest wish.
Exulting they behold the Pagans' thoughts
Sublim'd to fiercest frenzy, nor despair
Thro' such infuriate instruments to win
Full victory, such novel ardour fir'd
The warriors' heart, to see amid their war
The Gods themselves engag'd.
Now to his host
Th' infernal monarch tells, that soon as pause
Of battle shall allow occasion meet,
He deems it wisdom to display to sense
Of Guthrun, thoughtful chief, in vision vast
The fancied worlds of Odin, and the scenes
Of wonder through creation, by the bards
Taught and rehears'd in solemn strains. Whence thus
Inflam'd with credulous awe he may arouse
His followers to yet fiercer height of rage
Nor cease the madd'ning tumult, till the foe
In irresistible destruction whelm'd
Yield all the land to its just conquerors.

All praise the deep design: and plot to mark
Fit time to execute their dark intent.

V. 842—863.

Now o'er the world on silent pinions flew
The sable-coated night: nor yet the moon
Opening her shadowy chambers from the east
Look'd out with golden eye. To welcome rest
Throughout the English camp the chiefs retire;
But not Hianfrid. Sullen, and inflam'd
With disappointed rage, he sole remain'd
Watchful within his tent and ponder'd deep
Thoughts of revenge, and dark conspiracy,
Yet mask'd with guile. Longing he hop'd for morn,
That with remark'd occasion, he might seize
Some unsuspected trial of attempts,
Doom'd in his gloomy mind.
With lustre meek
O'er the serener heav'n angelic shapes
Floated, from earth unseen, yet mingling oft
Their starry-vested legions, as in turn
They met, while under their protective wings
The favor'd nation slept, and soothing dreams
Cheer'd their sweet slumbers to imagin'd peace.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK IX.

Hianfrid, having solicited permission, is sent with a flag of truce into the Danish camp. Here he contrives to get admittance into the tent of Kenwulph, of whom he darkly enquires what would be the reward of a revolt. Not finding an answer from Kenwulph agreeable to his wishes, he goes to Oskital and is promised power and dignity. The object of the truce being granted, the English dead are interred. Funeral song of Berthun. Alfred's contemplations and advice. The Danes also bury their countrymen fallen in the late battle. Obsequies of Frena, and song of the bards to his memory. During the night, Guthrun visits the tomb of Frena, and invokes his ghost to favor and assist the Danes. By the illusion of the demons, the ghost of Frena appears, and announces to Guthrun that Odin is about to display to him the glories of Valhalla. Odin appears, and after entrancing Guthrun, shews him a vision of the Gothic heaven. During the display, Odin gives him correspondent advice inciting him to fierceness, and presents him with celestial armour. They return to earth. Guthrun inflamed to a high pitch of enthusiasm and fury, enters the Danish camp.

ALFRED.

BOOK IX.

V. 1—19

SOON as the orient morning's upward beam
Had ting'd with gold the lark's dew-glitt'ring wings
Singing amid the rosy clouds, aris'n
Hianfrid to the regal mansion hastes,
Where as inspir'd with anxious zeal to free
His name from hated censure, and regain
The monarch's favor, earnest he intreats
That in th' approaching embassy himself
May own a place, nor mid the camp remain
Object of scorn, till worthy deeds may win
Merited honor.
To his meek request
The sov'reign, ready to forgive, nor prone
To mark a fault acknowledg'd and deplor'd
Yields glad assent. Instant the active thane
Prepares th' expectant heralds, ancient bards,
Clad in their flowing robes and in their hands
Bearing the sacred harp. Their honor'd train
Hianfrid, and his wont companion-friend

Harold the brave, conduct, and solemn wave
The snow-white flag of truce. Them soon the King
Instructs from Guthrun and th' associate chiefs
To ask a day's becoming rest of war,
Till in their last sad beds the fallen brave
Shall decent be inhum'd, nor on the earth
All red with gore deform the face of day.

As taught, the ready embassy proceeds
Strait to the hostile camp: and soon approach
The tented dome of its superior King,
Their peaceful ensign, as they pass, from all
Commanding rev'rence due. Their mission strait
They open to the Pagan chief, and ask
The truce desir'd. The thoughtful King delays
Immediate answer, but first dooms to seek
Of holy prophetesses sage advice,
If even short cessation of the war
Will now be grateful to expecting Gods.
The sacred dames appear at call, and hear
The purpos'd embassy. Forthwith their hands
Unfurl the magic Reafen, while with voice
Of charmed song their murm'ring lips invoke
Attendant spirits to reveal by signs
The will of fate. Nor such their pray'r preferr'd
Heard not the watchful demons, who aware
Of direr mischief brooding from afar
Against the faithful pow'rs, with joy prepar'd
Responsive omens, for they sought delay.
Vigilant they expected, that meantime

The Danish fleet immense should o'er the waves
Steer its swift course to Exham's tented shores,
Bearing innumerous aids of banded hosts
Eager to join their fellows, and o'erwhelm
Th' unconquer'd provinces. So deeming, strait
On wings unseen they sail around, and touch
With dark mysterious hand the wavy folds
Of the broad banner. Instant as with life
Gifted, the sacred bird exulting lifts
His sable wings, emblem of pleas'd assent:
Which plain response the holy dames proclaim
To all th' assembled throng. The willing King
Now to th' expectant embassy assures
His promise to concede their meet request:
But first detains awhile the herald-bards
Thro' fond desire to hear from these the strains
Of martial song, as utter'd by his foes.
Pleas'd, and with festive eagerness, he calls
His own high-honour'd train of bards, to mark
Alike th' unusual lays, or with contest
Of their own pow'rs, to rouse the swelling pomp
Of warlike melody.
Them thus employ'd
Hianfrid (marking glad th' occasion) asks
Permission from the King to leave awhile,
Feigning desire rather to see and hold
Converse unwont with Kenwulph, chief once known,
Ere to the Danish rule he join'd his pow'rs.
Ready the King assents, and to his side
Adds a conducting guide, who may escort

His passage to the Mercian leader's tent.
Together these depart, and soon arrive
The glitt'ring dome of Kenwulph, princely-deck'd,
Before whose entrance splendid Tufas wav'd,
Ensigns of royalty. Hianfrid here
Announc'd, bids wait awhile his guide, until
Himself return, as from the spacious tent
Kenwulph forth issuing the remember'd youth
Accosts. A gloom of sorrow, in his mien
Apparent, damp'd the friendly words of joy
Utter'd by the revolted chief. Apart
The youthful thane strait asks that they retire,
Where unobserv'd he safely may disclose
Thoughts of deep import lab'ring in his heart.
Within the ample tent both turn direct,
Where others all remov'd, and ev'ry guard
Secur'd of closest privacy, at length,
Mysterious evil brooding in his look,
And with half-falt'ring voice, the Thane thus spoke.

"Imperial sov'reign, fellow-warrior once,
Dare I in memory of former friendship
Utter to thy discreeter bosom thoughts
Conceiv'd by others than thyself, yet scarce
With doubt express'd. But be assur'd, there are
Within the English camp, I say not who,
What chieftains high and prudent, that admire
Rather they conduct, having join'd thy pow'rs
To the more potent side, whose countless host,
Invincible, deriding opposition, soon

Shall full subdue these realms, and dire revenge
Wreak on their foes perverse. There are who thee
Applaud, and thy example envy much
Rather than waste in perils and in wars
Yonder their lives still hazarded, expos'd
To toils and suff'rings infinite, with chance
None of success, of honour, or reward.
Yonder we gain no pow'r, no envied glory,
But constant must obey one zealot man,
Intent on fancied schemes of future peace,
Wealth, greatness, glory, sole in his own thought
Existing: but who others' merit owns
Never, or not rewards: perhaps whose pow'r,
Abridg'd by our bold foe, may not extend
Duly to compensate heroic deeds.
Here thee, whom higher hopes have hither led,
We see a King: before thy splendid dome
Wave high the glitt'ring Tufas, emblems proud
Of royalty: and to thy stately pomp
Obedient trains submit. What then, if soon,
Following thy great example, other chiefs
Should to th' opposing host conjoin their pow'rs?
Would their reward prove equal to thine own?"

V. 108—135.

With air dejected and a sigh deep-heav'd
From his full heart, the Mercian chief replied.

"Alas! that my seditious deeds allure
Others their sad example to pursue!
Ah! much-deceiv'd, unconscious youth, dispel

Thoughts of such import, in their consequence
Hideous and terrible. Deem not this shew
Of sov'reignty, this idle empty glare
Of titled royalty, can e'er repay
The loss of inward peace. These splendors yield
Never one moment's comfort, while the thought
Of my past guilt, and treacherous baseness, steeps
In keen remorse and conscious agony
My wearied senses, without hope, or end.
Ill have I barter'd for the name of King,
Innocence, truth, and honour lost! My heart
Upbraids me still, and ever to my ear
Whispers the name of—villain: that I hate
The light of day. I lay me down in grief.
I waken in despair. The festive board
Yields me no joy; but I remember still
That I am scorn'd of all: by all the good
Hated or overlook'd. Here I remain,
Aw'd by the savage Oskital, nor aught
Can Guthrun, chief of nobler nature, soothe
My troubled mind. Would that I could return
To duty, and resume my former state!
But that remains not. No! hence be that thought!
How would each meanest eye glance secret scorn
On all my steps, while Alfred all should love
And hail the father of his country. Oh!
Dismal reflection!—But I must endure,
And die despis'd, a traitor to my country.
Too credulous young man, let me dissuade
Any to purchase with a doom like mine

This form of honour, underneath whose garb
Despair lies hid, and all the spectre-shapes
Of misery, to torment th' entangled soul.
May my severe example serve to warn
Others to shun, not imitate, my steps."

He ended; and deep gloom o'ercast his mien.
Hianfrid, disappointed, silent rose:
Yet other thoughts revolving, as he left
The princely tent: for from his purpose, fear
Of future conscious pangs deterr'd him not.
Here failing, he revolv'd if ere he let
Occasion slip, he safely might reveal
His meditated hopes to some high chief
Among the Danes, of pow'r to aid his views.
On Oskital at length his wavering thought
Fix'd, as most opportune, from whose fam'd wealth
And not too scrupulous honour he might hope
Assistance in his aim: for much he fear'd
Lest Guthrun, proud and martial, might disdain
Th' unwarlike proffer and reject with scorn.
This doom'd, he bids his prompt attendant lead
His steps to Oskital's abode: which soon
They mark, proud-glitt'ring with majestic state.
Announc'd, th' ambitious thane the princely dome
Enters, not void of fear, but in his hand
He grasp'd the snow-white flag, honour'd of all.
Apart within his tent the gloomy King
Lay on his couch, not yet from ghastly wounds
Recover'd, by the arm of Alwin dealt

In single fight. Around him various dames,
Skill'd in the cure of wounds, dispens'd their care:
Whom strait remov'd, soon as the dynast saw
The peaceful banner, sign of message high,
Hianfrid to his couch approaching slow
Opens in brief his traitorous thought, and asks,
Should any other chief from motives wise
Seceding to the Danish part, pursue
Kenwulph's example, if a like reward
Of splendor and the titled name of King
Should crown the bold emprise. To whom with voice
Falt'ring, as if in pain, the Dane replied.

" Not only should the chief immediate rule
Hold over subject pow'rs: but when his aid
Had leagued with us yet sooner to subdue
The realm of England, and divide its spoils,
Then should he royal dignity enjoy,
Reigning o'er conquer'd slaves: while we would take
Dreadful revenge on our inveterate foes.
For I abhor the coward English, bent
On peace and lowly arts, unworthy men.
Me deem not by an English arm o'erpow'r'd,
Tho' Gods averse, or fate, may late have giv'n
A momentary triumph to my foe.
For unrelenting, unsubdued, I mean
Again to try his prowess, and to whelm
In fierce destruction his short-beaming glory."

From the proud King th' ambitious traitor turn'd

Joyful to hear his promise; yet with heart
Appall'd with terror at his threats austere.
Now toward Guthrun's dome th' attendant leads V. 223—252.
Thro' many a range of warlike tents, where bands
Bright'ning their gory armour, or employ'd
In rearing altars to propitious Gods,
Gaz'd on the passing stranger with stern look,
Yet harm'd him not. But not the selfish thane
Thought of his captive colleagues, or desir'd
To mark their piteous state. Soon they arrive
The royal tent, where the majestic King
Still occupied they find in listening strains
Of warlike import, and each sounding lay
Applauding as it roll'd.

Th' expectant train
Now by Hianfrid led, whose face assum'd
Deceitful smiles, the hostile confines leave;
Nor their glad course delay till they arrive
The English camp. Here soon is spread around
The issue of their mission and the news
Of truce obtain'd. Forthwith on ev'ry side
The pious bands prepare funereal rites
For their fall'n colleagues, and in hollow shields
Bear portions of green earth to raise aloft
Their honourable mounds. Then to the field
Where lay the breathless warriors they proceed,
Accompanied by ev'ry chief, and trains
Of sacred priests array'd in spotless robes,
And a lov'd female throng, whose beauty wore
Th' endearing mien of sorrow. Nor delay

The active warriors o'er each fallen friend
To raise his earthly monument, and place
Near him his blood-stain'd arms. Grief's milder sighs
Affectionate, and many a silent tear
Bewail their fate. Religion's ministers
Breathe calm to heav'n their fervent orisons,
And near each tomb th' expected bards attune
The songs of fame. O'er Berthun's death-cold corse,
Lamented chief, his mournful followers rear
A lofty mound, conspicuous o'er the plain,
To which, the last sad obsequies perform'd,
Bards of chief note approach, and on the harp
Aiding the voice resound the hero's fame.

" Mourn, mourn, ye brave: fall'n is your gallant pride;
Berthun renown'd is fall'n; the tear humane
Check not, that drops upon his honour'd tomb.
Ye saw full oft, when mid the thickest fight
His azure banner stream'd on high, and shew'd
Amid its gold-deck'd folds the pictur'd hawk,
Victory's sign, that call'd from far the bold
To share high deeds of glory. Ye have seen
When like an oak that mid the warring winds
Smiles with uninjur'd majesty, he strove
With hostile multitudes; lifting his shield,
Broad as the rising moon, but as a rock
Steadfast, behind whose mighty bulwark stood
His dauntless pow'rs: nor thus defended, fear'd
The roaring storm of battle, nor the waves
Of foes on foes that as a surging sea

Came pouring on in vain. His awful sword
Hurl'd light'nings on the foe, burning with death.
From his red anlace fled the trembling sons
Of Odin, and implor'd their Gods in vain.
He darted on his prey, as from the clouds
The broad-wing'd eagle stoops on lamb or fawn.
While his resounding voice from far inspir'd
His troops, as rolling to their ears it came,
Like thunder over heav'n, but call'd their paths
To certain vict'ry: to th' astonish'd foe
Terrible, as the howl of wolves amid
Wide pathless forests, when at night they bay
The shudd'ring moon. His glaring hauberk drove
Impatient squadrons, as before the gale
Autumnal fly the wither'd leaves; dispers'd
As insects sporting in the beams of noon.
But fallen is their terror. Hark, ev'n now
Exultingly they shout.—" Abandon fear;
On, on to battle! Berthun is no more!"—
Ah! mournful is that sound—he is no more!—
Yet his example still survives to rouse
The sons of glory to majestic deeds.
Amid the secret vale his beauteous wife
Pines as a solitary flow'r, whose stem
Unpitying winds have stript of all its bloom.
She mourns her tender husband lost, whose love
Shed soothing influence o'er his happy home,
As the soft moon-beams cheer the whispering vale.
Yet from that home forlorn ere long shall spring
Another stock. His infant son shall hear

Joyful his father's fame, and emulate
His noble deeds. Grieve not, afflicted fair,
And you, ye sons of valour, cease to mourn.
For in his country's cause the hero died,
And tho' from earth remov'd, shall sure enjoy
His meet reward of bliss in heav'n, amid
The bosom of the gen'rous and the good."

While thus were occupied the fervent bands,
Amid the plain the monarch-warrior pass'd,
Indulging, as he rov'd pensive and slow,
Sublimer thought. In strong emotion rapt,
His mighty mind ponder'd the heav'n-chang'd state
Of his fall'n friends: the awful attributes
Of man's immortal soul: silent revolv'd
His own immense designs, yet immature,
And, wond'ring, own'd the maze of Providence
That ever out of evil perfects good.
Yet oft the King with meek humility
And winning condescension would address
The lowest of his soldiers, whom if known
A worthy man, the duties of his place
Performing well, he honour'd as a friend
And fellow-warrior. Oft the tranced mind
Of list'ning multitudes he would inspire
To solemn hope of future heav'nly bliss.
And while themselves surviv'd, that they should see
Won for their country peace and happiness.

" Banish despair, (the royal chief would say)

And bear in mind that without evil mix'd
Nothing or good or great is giv'n to man.
This earthly scene is but a transient stage
Of trial, that for nobler, better life
Prepares us, if we cherish virtuous deeds.
The friends whose loss we mourn, fall'n in the cause,
Of their dear country, liberty and heav'n,
Are but before us gone to share rewards
Of heav'nly happiness. Toil, pain, and care,
Are doom'd on earth the price by which we gain,
And must preserve, whatever dear we hold
Or prize as estimable, so to train
And exercise our lives in patient virtue.
Each has his part assign'd, to ev'ry man
His proper duties giv'n, and ev'ry man
Obedient, good, wins in this glorious cause
Immortal honour: and from earth remov'd,
If by these feelings led, shall sure obtain
Communion meet in heav'n with those bright trains
Of faithful angels, who in virtue tried,
Glide thro' the worlds of light in perfect bliss.
These from above men's weak contentions eye
Averse, or with superior looks of pity,
As knowing all but creatures of one kind,
Bound on one journey to an earthly grave,
Yet meant for various scenes of happiness,
Or misery, as on earth their various works
Have fitted them to rank in either state.
Then cherish hope: heav'n sure must be our friend,
Since 'tis for heav'n we fight; and with its aid,

We yet shall live to see our country's weal
By our own toils atchiev'd, and all our hopes
With ample consummation crown'd. Be firm,
Be brave, as wont. Life kept for misery
And foul dishonour sure is nothing worth.
Lost in the cause of virtue, it remains
The noble price of victory and the bliss
Of England and your sons to latest time."

Thus wan'd the hours, till now the soften'd light
Of evening ting'd with gold the dewy air.
Nor less among the Danes religious zeal
For ev'ry fallen hero fram'd a tomb.
Wide o'er the plain, directing pious rites,
The chieftains stray. In lofty mounds are laid
The breathless warriors, in their armour clad,
And near them shield and spear repos'd. Full oft
Within the stiffen'd hand is plac'd a cup
Gold-tipt, triumphant guerdon from the crest
Torn of a conquer'd foe, which they may lift
With honour in Valhalla's festive halls.
The sacred priests attend around, and loud
Invoke th' almighty Odin to defend
These graves by holy tomb-fires hovering near
From sacrilegious rapine. Obsequies
Of solemn pomp inhume the last remains
Of Frena, fallen chief. His stern-look'd pow'rs
First on a rising mount, from far beheld,
Heap a tall mass of earth: then in its womb
They place their leader's honour'd corse: around

A silent multitude admiring stands,
Thro' whose thick throng with wonted pomp is led
The buried hero's war-horse, in array
Of battle rich-caparison'd. Beside
The lofty mound they lead him: then approach
The priests, who lifting their fix'd eyes to heav'n,
And uttering to the Gods mysterious pray'rs,
Plunge in his heart the knife of sacrifice.
Prostrate on earth, the bleeding steed they lift
Near his dead master; and around them place
Armour, and ornaments of gold, and cups
Won from the scalps of fallen foes, to grace
Their splendid entrance into Odin's courts.
Clos'd the huge sepulchre, the bards advance,
And to the sounding harp attune the song
Of fame, in memory of the hero dead.

"Awake, immortal melodies: float soft,
Ye heav'nward breezes, let the tide of song
Roll on your wings a mighty warrior's praise.
Frena, the great, the pow'rful, borne on high
Beyond the summit of heav'n's arched bridge,
Enters Valhalla's mansions. He in fight
Fell sword in hand, nor left in vain the hills
And pine-clad precipices, where he held
Kingly dominion, ere his thronging ships
Bore his collected pow'rs to England's shores.
But peace and calm content could never hold
His noble spirit confin'd. With pow'r and rage
Terrible as Niord, when his vast voice

Bids the dark-swelling ocean scale the stars
And calls the frighted Gods, he furious came
To seek his foes. Omnipotent as Thor
Who in his hand the blasting thunder sways
That vollying shakes the skies, the hero burst
Upon th' astonish'd land. Along the beach
Stood his collected host, sublime as tow'rs,
In armour brilliant as the palaces
Of Odin, roof'd with golden shields. They pour'd
O'er all the plains, tremendous as the snow
That from four corners of the world shall rush
At once, and darken heav'n, the destin'd sign
Of that tremendous time arriv'd, when Gods
Must yield to ruin. Them their monarch led
Burning in flamy steel, and to the view
Seem'd Surtur, horrid King, when he shall head
From mid their world of fire the giants huge
Of Muspelsheim, blazing in sun-bright ranks.
Against his foes th' impetuous hero drove,
Fierce as a meteor sallies o'er the sky,
When ev'ry sea-wave glares with lurid light,
He sat upon his steed, brilliant as day,
The son of night, who on his shining horse
Rides o'er the world and from his splendid mane
Shakes radiance. In amaze his pow'rless foes
Stood palsied, and beheld his rushing pow'rs
Terrific, deathful, as the gulfy jaws
Of Niflheim's dark abode, where rivers roll
Anguish, and tempest, and perdition. These
Drove on with clamour, furious as the winds

V. 450—459.

Roar thro' the mountain caverns that alarm
The trembling savage in his inmost den.
Beneath the mighty chief's resistless arm
Fell his proud foes, as from Norwegian hills
By tempests torn, blown from the thund'ring deep,
Riv'n crags descend, heap'd high with ice-bound snow.
Amid the fight he rag'd with awful voice
Loudly resounding, as the northern seas
Roar mid opposing isles and shake the tow'rs
Of Odin's stately city and the woods
Of ancient Funen. Scatter'd legions fled
Confus'd along the plain, as when in storms
Collected navies, borne on mountainous waves,
Soar o'er the main, till whelm'd on rocks and shoals
Their floating fragments spread the surge afar.
Amid the bloody torrents stalk'd the chief,
Disdaining death, till his last hour arriv'd,
He, by the Valkyries exulting mark'd
For honourable fate, fell as a rock
That overbrows the deep, by rushing tides
Long undermin'd, with horrible uproar
Sinks 'mid the swelling ocean. Death to him
Delicious came, extatic as the love
Of the chaste virgin, when with eager arms
After some hard-fought day she to her breast
Receives her gallant hero, and her eyes
Beaming blue lustre, gazing fondness, speak
Her silent transport. Boundless shall his fame
For ages last, extensive as the glance
Of Odin from his throne, when he surveys

V. 460—489.

All worlds: yet fairer than the ev'ning star,
Who ere approaching night ascends the skies
On her dew-shedding steed, thro' soft-hued trees
Pours her mild beams serene. Immortal song
Shall still renew his name, as the green pine
Waves his fresh branches in the show'r of spring.
Nor here shall end his glory. Vying bards
In presence of heav'n's King shall sound his deeds,
Unceasing, thro' Valhalla's courts gold-pav'd."

Conspicuous near the tomb, the monarch-chief
Stood, and with joy listen'd the song of praise
Tun'd to the memory of a much-lov'd friend,
Fallen in war. Now o'er the busy plain
The thronging multitudes advance, and raise
Aloft with mighty labour pond'rous stones,
Monuments of the fight, whose pillar'd bulk
Might to the passing trav'ler long recall
The scene of blood, and point the warrior's graves.
On ev'ry hand the sov'reign gen'ral moves,
Inspiring solemn ardour, for he spoke,
Where'er he pass'd, of never-ending fame,
Glory, and rich dominion to be won
On earth by toils like these, and after death
Eternal bliss in heav'n, the bright reward
Of valour, tried amid the bloody field.
That England's total realm should own them Lords:
When banishing ignoble peace, and arts
Unworthy heroes, war, unceasing war,
Should flourish thro' the land, the certain gate

Opening admission into Odin's halls:
Nor ample spoil should fail: these fertile fields
Should yield exhaustless plenty: well exchang'd
For icy hills, and savage-haunted woods.
While in that mean religion's room, profess'd
By their blind foes, their own bold faith should claim
All men as votaries, and should uplift
Proud altars to their Gods on ev'ry plain.

Now o'er the cope of heav'n soft-winged night
Had drawn her starry veil, and shades obscure
Declin'd upon the earth. The scene of fight
The warriors leave, and thro' the gen'ral camp
Prepare the feast. The chiefs convene, as wont,
Within their sov'reign's tent, and there partake
Around his festal board princely regale.
The flesh of deer, and oxen ta'en in spoil,
Steams plenteous o'er the table. Virgins hand
To ev'ry hero the deep-curved horn,
Inlaid with gold, or skull of spotless white,
Fill'd with rich mead. Proceeds the splendid feast,
While bards with warlike song inspire the hope
Of never-with'ring fame. Converse ensues,
While each his thought proposes for th' array
Of future fields, and chiefs debating form
Their coming plans, by morn to be review'd
In solemn council, and as wont confirm'd.

Swift flew the hours, till o'er the silent world
Night held her mid dominion. All retire

To their dark-curtain'd domes, seeking repose.
But Guthrun, press'd with sorrow, and intent
On lofty meditations, sleepless sat
Awhile within his tent: then pass'd unseen
O'er the dim field of death, till he approach'd
Alone and pensive the high-shadowing tomb
Of Frena, fallen King. Awhile he stood
Silent beside the grave. Awful appear'd
The scene around. Now was the dreary time,
The dead of night, when swift the flitting stars
Shot o'er the troubled sky. Uncertain clouds
Roll'd dark before the moon, whose shadows huge
Mov'd slow along the earth. The wolf's deep howl
Sounded from far. Hollow the dismal wind
Moan'd thro' the waving woods. The boding owl
Flapp'd by, and to the startled thought gave sign
That now the hour had rule, when spirits of night
Roam o'er the world, on various doom of evil
Charg'd to mankind. Fronting the charmed north
The monarch stood, and solemn with his spear
Touch'd the new tomb. Heav'nward he rais'd his face,
Dim-seen beneath his helm. The moon-beams shew'd
O'er his stern features an unusual tint
Of paleness spread, that spoke the lab'ring mind
Inrapt in earnest thought. Whom thus intent
The demon pow'rs observ'd, not without awe
Mov'd at his mien. They recollecting strait
Their former purpose, instantly concert
Fulfillment of their deep designs.

The King

Swelling with high emotion vents his pray'r.

" Ghost of departed Frena, friend belov'd, V. 577—605.
Whether thy soul yet hovers o'er this earth,
Or seated near the throne of Valhall's King
Enjoys sublime pre-eminence, my voice
Invokes thee. By thy fame in songs of bards
Eternally inroll'd, by thy high place
Won in the ranks of heav'n's inhabitants,
By all the bodies of thy countrymen
Slain upon England's plains, by Odin's love,
By the dark gates of hell, thee I adjure.
Hear me, oh! hear. Be it thy holy care
In ev'ry scene of death to watch the host
Bereft of thee. Them to the favouring love
Of ev'ry God commend, but to the God
Of battle chief, that never fear may taint
One Danish heart, but to the combat all
May rush, disdaining death, and sword in hand
Fall in the blood-drench'd field, each in his hour;
Mark'd by the watchful Valkyries. Whence all
Shall in due time enjoy communion proud
With thee and noblest heroes, and partake
In presence of heav'n's King extatic feasts;
Drinking rich mead from skulls of fallen foes:
Till by celestial battles long matur'd
For nobler enterprizes, they aspire
From her original enemies to guard
Assailed nature, and when worlds shall sink
In final ruin, for reward to win

Gimle's abodes, and never-ending joys."—

Instant slow-rolling o'er the lofty tomb,
Thick clouds descend: amid whose meteor-fires
Pale-flashing, dim appears a shadowy shape,
Of awful view: formless and dark, it seems
To the bewilder'd gaze a being arm'd
Obscure with mighty shield, bedropp'd with blood.
Near its vast, transient limbs appears to rise
A spear, and as at times the winds upraise
Its flaky locks, to sight is slow reveal'd
A death-pale visage, wearing like the looks
Of Frena, when alive. The moon scarce shed
Her beams on the dread image. In its shades
It stood, and bending forth its fleeting arm,
A moment glanc'd upon the earth its eyes
Livid, like stars that fading quit the night.
At last a hollow voice thus broke the air.

"I hear thee, mighty King; and tho' my spirit
Now holds converse with heav'nly beings, mark
Thy pray'r. The Gods with favor thee behold.
Be firm; prepare; for hark! I tell thee now,
That won to share thy glorious enterprize,
Ere to Valhalla's glitt'ring halls I fly,
A God will deign to speak with mortal man."

So saying, swiftly vanish'd as to air
The dreadful shape. Amid expanding light
Sublimer visions on the sight arose.

A stupefactive trance o'erpow'r'd each sense
Of the awe-wilder'd King, as fix'd he stood,
Meekly adoring, while the veil of night, V. 633—661.
Withdrawn, amid the open'd air display'd
To his enlighten'd eyes the pomp of Gods
Preparing to depart to Valhall's courts.
Conspicuous, arm'd in steel, with clashing noise
The God of war came striding over clouds,
A pillar huge of fire; likest a storm
O'ershadowing heav'n, pregnant with sulphrous flame.
His golden shield beam'd like the setting sun.
His dreadful sword was in his hand: his look
Might wither armies; and upon his crest
Death sat, too terrible to view. Around them throng'd
Valkyries arm'd: and chariots bright and steeds
Innumerous waited near, that bore alike
Celestial shapes, or fill'd with hosts of slain.
Tyr, God of single fight, scarce curb'd awhile
Th' impatient tygers, ready now for flight,
That bore the chariot of heav'n's mighty King.
Approach'd the OMNIPOTENT, until he stood
Near the prostrated chief, to whose rapt ears
These awful words like bursting thunder roll'd.

" Hail, Guthrun: fear not: thine heroic deeds
Odin approves, and seconds thy designs.
Thee in my favor high I hold. Come then:
Enjoy a glorious meed, to living man
Yet never granted. Tow'rd heav'n's glitt'ring coasts
Ev'n now I part with my celestial train,

Bearing from earth my prize of heroes fall'n,
Grasping their swords in the last bloody fight.
Ascend with us: for thou shalt now receive
Ocular proof: that taught thou may'st inspire
Thy countrymen, and to their sense relate
All thou shalt see, all that for ev'ry man
Bold in the cause of valour is prepar'd.
Fear not: unharm'd thou shalt to earth return,
Ere the first glance of early morning shine.
And in Valhalla's courts I will present
To thy delighted hand heav'n-temper'd arms,
With which in future fields thou may'st contend
Invincible, and all thy mighty aims
Accomplish.—Rise—leap to thy feet erect."

So saying, the God with his protruded sword
Touch'd the prone chief: a sudden rapture thrill'd
Thro' all his limbs, of earth unborn. His frame
Seem'd all-intranc'd. Led by the Deity,
He to a lofty chariot sprang; whose reins
Th' intrepid Tyr swift-seiz'd and to his seat
Ascended proud, all-arm'd in radiant brass,
That loud-resounded as beside the chief
He took his place.
Wing'd steeds display'd abroad
Their vans, awaiting signal to depart:
While all the bright procession in array
Marshal their awful pomp, ready alike
For their celestial voyage. Round the scene
Th' intranced monarch cast his eyes, and saw

The shadowy form of Frena tow'rd the car
Ascend of Odin, where in crowds appear
The ghosts of warriors, bloody, pale, each shape
And visage in the troubled memory
Fresh of the Danish chief: for all had late
Follow'd him to the field of death. Where'er
He look'd, each heav'nly being seem'd to bear
On steed or car heroic shapes, their swords
Gore-red, dim-gleaming thro' a veil of clouds.
Soon to his throne sublime heav'n's King advanc'd,
And with his flamy sword, like thunder, smote
His shield, the sign for his throng'd host to move.
All strait obey: and urge their transient course
Thro' the mid air: in order due they sail
Wide o'er the skies ascending, and below
Survey the countries of the various earth
Swiftly recede, as over each they pass:
Th' amazed monarch of his partner God
Enquires.
" In what dominion of the world
First shall we hail the fiery bridge of heav'n?"
To whom benign the God. " Wait but awhile:
Soon o'er the middle of the earth high-rais'd,
Above Asgard's proud fortress, 'mid whose tow'rs
Frequent the Gods descend and thro' the air
Perform their various errands, we shall view
The burning arch that to the realms of light
Leads up direct." He scarce had spoke, when lo!
Beaming before their eyes from either end
Of heav'n in vast expanse a colour'd bow

Rose high, that as they nearer drew admiring
Seem'd all construct of solid fire: from far
Rainbow in aspect, such as mortal men
Behold when show'ry clouds oppose the sun,
Now its contiguous frame to sight display'd
Divinest art, which of concentred flames
Had wrought a massy bridge, the glitt'ring road
For Gods 'twixt heav'n and earth to pass at will.
Under its radiant vault a thousand hosts
Rushing conjunct to battle might have mov'd
With order undisturb'd.
Aloft wide-blaz'd
Near the broad confines of apparent heav'n
A fortress huge, built on the dazzling arch,
With tow'rs sublime, impenetrable, vast,
And ev'ry martial work by art of Gods
Thro' many an age invented for defence.
Th' enraptur'd chieftain much the work admir'd,
As on the frame superb he fix'd his gaze,
When thus his high companion. "Yon bright fort
Whose warlike structure so attracts thy view
Is Heimdall's vast abode, the Sentry-God,
Whose sacred charge is, as thou know'st, to guard
Heav'n's entrance from th' assaults of mighty foes,
Oft sallying from their worlds beneath, in hope
To storm her mansions ere their destin'd time
He knows their pow'r, and mindful of surprize
Sleeps less than birds that guard their young: he looks
A hundred leagues around: and lifts on high
A trumpet, whose vast roar sounds thro' all worlds.

But neither this stupendous bridge, nor aught
Strong or terrific in yon fort inclos'd,
Nor substance thro' all nature, must intend
Resistance, on that last tremendous day,
Twilight of Gods, when Loke's fell progeny,
And all the sons of Muspell's fiery world,
By Surtur led, leagued with the giant host
Troop'd from aerial deeps, shall o'er the earth
Burst in wide flaming ranks, and this huge arch
Crushing beneath their weight, invade heav'n's tow'rs:
While Gods and hosts of Heroes numberless
Shall strive in vain to ward destructive fires,
Hurl'd over all Creation."
" Awful time!
Return'd th' attentive monarch," " well may then
Th' Almighty Father to his blest abodes
Lift, and inure to battle, heroes tried
In valour, to contend with foes like these!"

Thus as they talk, the gorgeous pomp ascends
The broad and gold-bright road, resplendent more
Than that fair starry way in heav'n, surnam'd
The Galaxy: and past the fort divine
Moves in long train. The conscious Deity,
Who there held residence, the passing state
Honours with blasts of sounding alchemy
That shake the basis of heav'n's vaulted bridge;
Till near its centre now arriv'd, behold!
Th' amazing prospect from below unfolds
Full on the view. The hero lost in awe

Gaz'd downward, while his prompt associate shew'd
With pointing hand the system of the worlds,
Visible thence. Beneath the central arch
A mighty citadel deep-reach'd, until
It touch'd the middle of the earth, outstretch'd
Below in various prospect, which appear'd
A pond'rous globe, within a vast abyss
Floating of serene air, and girt with seas.

" That is the citadel of Gods," exclaim'd
The heav'nly shape, " Asgard its name, whence oft
They issue thro' the air, and o'er the earth,
Bent on good offices to man. But mark!
Where betwixt earth and heav'n, the dark-brow'd night
Sails on her shadowy car, drawn by her steed
Rimfaxé, from whose mane and foamy bit
Hoar-frost and dews drop o'er the earth. The moon,
Within his variable chariot thron'd,
Waits on her pomp, with all yon train of stars.
These first speed round the world. Day follows next,
Celestial child of Night, whose fulgent state
Skinfaxé draws, fair steed, that waves abroad
His golden mane, illumining the air
And all the earth. Yonder thou may'st discern
Their confines, chang'd with light and dark. The sun
Thron'd in her chariot, work of Odin's hand,
Attends Day's moving splendor. Swiftly fly
Both sun and moon, endanger'd still, for foes
Pursue them ever, wolf-like shapes, that seek
Them to devour, their prey, and sometimes reach

Each tardier light. Then struggles fierce ensue,
As thou hast seen, which to the darken'd world
Cause those dread eclipses, when conscious men
Strive with deep noise and clamours to affright
The monsters from their grasp.—Cast now thine eyes
Afar beyond the north of earth's broad globe.—
Yon darkly-gleaming, rocky, ice-heap'd piles,
That seen at times amid tempestuous air
Frown on the brink of night, are Niflheim's world,
Th' abodes of woe and death, where Hela holds
Hideous dominion, and dark rivers roll
Poison, and tears of coward men, who there
Eternal-tortur'd float.—Now thwart th' abyss
Carry thy vast survey, far past the south
Of the terrestrial ball. Yon lurid fires
That redd'ning glare amid dim-clouded space
Shew Muspelsheim's dread world, where Surtur rules
His giant-legions thro' vast realms of flame,
Their armour and their element, to Gods
Awfullest adversaries.—All between
These distant worlds, lies an immense abyss
Of calm and serene air, in which hangs pois'd
Earth's globe, the vessel of the ages, built
By pow'r divine of old. Thro' such expanse
Aërial, dwell the giants of the frost,
Who there roam unconfin'd, and proud construct
A ship, which on the last dread day their chief
Rymer shall steer upon earth's ocean, swell'd
In storming deluge over all her climes
By the huge serpent there inclos'd, whom Fate

Shall then to a terrific spectre change,
Joining heav'n's congregated enemies.—
Hence, as thou see'st, we gain a shadowy glimpse
Of nature's various worlds; but our faint view
Holds no compare with Odin's clear survey,
When in his heav'nly city 'bove our heads
High-rais'd upon his blazing throne, he eyes
Creation through, and marks the various works
Of all its habitants.—That city soon
And proud monarchal throne we shall behold."

So as he spoke, th' ascending state had reach'd
The climes of heav'n, while the translated chief
Perceiv'd around irradiate air, that breath'd
Extatic influence: and his eye was seiz'd
With prospect of unutterable glories
On ev'ry hand. A city first they pass
Close on the frontiers, where the fiery arch
Pontifical conjoins those beamy realms,
And mark admiring its huge garrison,
Gleaming of solid steel: which soon the God
Announc'd as Himinborg's aspiring tow'rs.
But these scarce held their view: for now arose
On the rapt sight, sublime in fields of air,
A far-refulgent city, o'er Asgard
Vertical and the earth, its gorgeous frame
Built of pure silver, and uplift displaying
Imperial palaces with golden shields
All-roof'd. Superb-exalted in the midst,
Magnificence all other far surpass'd

(That else had shone pre-eminent) a throne
Of blood-red columns rais'd, with arched dome
High-overhung, more dazzling than the sun
Setting at eve amid the crimson waves.
Might seem that all heav'n's riches were profus'd
O'er this triumphant glory. Sov'ran pow'r
Blaz'd in its aspect, and bespoke the God
Who there dispens'd dominion. Nor the chief
Waited to hear this as the throne announc'd
Of heav'n's high King, which its own pomp proclaim'd.
He knew the Godlike structure, and with awe
Hail'd Lidskialfa, fam'd on earth, there call'd
Terror of nations: and the city knew
Valaskialf, of Odin lov'd abode.
Which pass'd, far spread on either hand he sees
Many celestial cities, wanting none
Majestic garrisons. In each appear'd
Beings of shape divine, who thronging came,
To mark the proud procession, as it pass'd
Thro' heav'n's wide regions. Alfheim's tow'red walls
They pass, abodes of glorious essences,
Bright as the rays of noon. Breidalblik next
For beauty fam'd they mark, where Balder holds
His kingly palaces, the radiant son
Of Odin, prime in eloquence and grace;
O'er whose cerulean pillars were inscrib'd
Verses that fervent-utter'd could recall
The dead to life. Next Glitner's flame-hued spires
They in their course approach, whose mansions all
Beam'd of pure gold, with silver roof'd, where held

Forseté, Balder's son, his splendid courts,
Ever employ'd to reconcile disputes
Of Gods or heroes. Now their pomp arrives
That holy city, capital of heav'n,
Where all the Gods hold residence, each day
Hither resorting on fleet steeds or cars,
With purpose to consult on nature's works
And the decrees of fate. All glories here
August were met: empyreal courts, and domes
Enshrin'd with regal ornament, adapt
For heav'n's potential governors. Advance
Full thro' the midst of this metropolis
The stranger cars, and cross the central plain,
Ida surnam'd of Gods, on which appears
The hall magnificent of purest gold,
Where twelve deputed judges daily sit
Around a throne rais'd for heav'n's puissant King
On lofty seats, deliberating there
Celestial government, and to dispense
Justice to Gods and men. In this fair clime
They mark the Goddess-mansion, Vinglod nam'd,
Abode of love and friendship. Beams around
Each shape to female beauty dear; and grace
Still-varying charms the gaze. Immortal flow'rs
Bloom all in sight. Music usurps the air:
Doves sit on bowers, bending with nectar'd fruits,
Cooing their notes of love to melody
Of other warbling birds that deck the groves,
Or swan-like sail on silv'ry lakes, whose breast
Reflected grandeur blent with rural scenes.

Here stands the palace of heav'n's matchless Queen,
Goddess of love and beauty; long surnam'd
By the celestials, "union of the world."
Near which proud seat, attracted next the view
The artists' glitt'ring hall, dear to the Gods,
Where furnaces wide-blaz'd, and anvils rung,
And sounding hammers, with all instruments
Meet for the forge: for here fam'd artizans
Wrought for the Gods in gold, or brilliant stone,
Or polish'd wood, armour, and chariots rich,
And ev'ry work apt for the field or dome.
Now first with rapt amaze the Danish King,
Whose sense yet other wonders had absorb'd,
Perceives aloft a tree immense, whose arms
Wide-branching overhead, roof beyond sight,
As with a verd'rous canopy, all heav'n,
With all her cities, ev'n the fulgent throne
Of Odin, thence conspicuous. Strait his thought
Remembers that fame-honour'd Ash, by bards
On earth nam'd Hydrasil, with holiest awe
Ever express'd, whose triple-parted root
O'er heav'n, o'er Niflheim's world, and o'er the earth
Was sung diffus'd. To his admiring look
His Partner-God yields answering speech, and tells
That this is that transcendent, awful tree,
Shadow or image of Eternity,
Or Pow'r Supreme, omniscient, yet unknown,
Which in its vast embrace contains all heav'n
With all her continents, and Gods, and men:
One root fix'd here, another over earth

V. 928—957.

Extending downward thro' the vast abyss,
Under which second root deep-hidden springs
The fount of truth and wisdom, and the last
Wide-spreading root borne over Niflheim's world,
Shadowing the realms of death, where coward men
Are punish'd everlastingly.
Deep-felt
Astonishment inraps the lab'ring mind
Of Guthrun, pond'ring such supernal pow'r.—
To join the bright procession on its way
Tow'rd Valhall's palaces, the Gods now throng,
And Goddess-train from out their starry homes.
These leaving strait their orient capital
Pass near its confines a wide-salient spring,
The fountain of time-past, upon whose brink
Shines a superb and much rever'd abode
Dwelt by the Fates, three sister-virgins, nam'd
Past, Present, and Future, who from this fount
Draw water, and to ev'ry man dispense
His destiny and age; to some men good,
To others evil: whence these pow'rs may well
From men claim admiration high and pray'rs.
The King had heard their station, and ador'd
Their attributes. His sociate Deity
Tells now, that intervening object none
Will stay their course, ere they arrive the fields
For battle destin'd, spread around the tow'rs
Of Valhall, beaming far. Joy all his frame
Pervaded, that so soon he should behold
Th' assembled heroes, during many an age

Strait they perceive IX.
Green champains, wide-outspread, teeming with flow'rs V. 988—1017.
And richest herbs, blood-fed: for these the plains
Were to the King display'd, where in array
Of martial splendor from Valhalla's courts
Effus'd, innumerable heroes mix
Each day in fight, and all the storm of war
Provoke, till evening's shade, when all the dead
Rise up unhurt, and back to their wide domes
March to partake luxurious feasts, and quaff
Mead from the skulls of foes, o'erpow'r'd on earth.
Across these spacious scenes th' advancing pomp
Proceeds, and strown around on ev'ry hand
Perceives celestial armour, shields and spears
In conflict riv'n, and many a vestige plain
Of furious carnage, there atchiev'd.
At length
Appear Valhalla's glories. From afar
Innumerable gates blaze on the sight,
Likest the purple doors whence on the world
Aurora from the chambers of the east
Lets out the sun. Tow'rs, columns, monuments,
Flaming with orient radiance to the clouds
Rise, and o'er each victorious trophies, plum'd
Standards, and kingly tufas, and ensigns
With gems or crescents all anneal'd, and wove
With tissued light, in rich expansion wave,
Whose silv'ry wings create a beamy heav'n,
More splendid than when Hesperus leads on

His starry host. At sight of which, his shield
Th' Almighty Father strikes, whose awful roar
Announc'd, as wont, his proud approach, while all
The new heav'n-wafted ghosts upsent a shriek
Of eager acclamation to behold
Their future blissful home. Skill'd in the sign,
Forth from Valhalla's courts thro' countless gates
The hosts of conscious warriors rush to meet
With seemly state heav'n's mighty King, all cas'd
In wide-resplendent arms on plumed steeds
Caparison'd in gold, in numbers more
Unnumber'd, than the ocean waves that rise
Successive-dancing in the rays of morn.
Trumpets resounding, and the neigh of steeds
Deafen with warlike noise the air, while all
The gorgeous pageantry in union vast
Enters superb pavilions, pav'd with stars,
Whose cieling, of refulgent shields compact,
Within its ample skyey-vaulted cope
Held thrones innumerous and order'd seats
Of sapphire or of crystal, but more rich
Than eastern Sultan spreads, when wond'ring realms
Behold his regal state display profus'd
All India's gather'd wealth.
To solemn seats
Approach the whole procession in array;
While all the stranger ghosts with honour due
Are led by Deities to lofty thrones.
Th' all-beauteous Frea and the Valkyries
Place in conspicuous range her boasted half,

Borne from the field of death. Then heav'n's high King
In sight of all th' assembly tow'rd the midst
Leads Guthrun's tranced frame, and him to all
By name announces, as a mighty chief,
Of heav'n high-favor'd, and enjoying now
Honours to living man yet never shewn;
Translated before death to view th' abodes
Of blissful heroes, whom his wars on earth
Shall soon increase with many a legion, fall'n
In bloody fight. For his victorious arms
Shall soon a broad and fertile isle subdue,
Albion far-fam'd, and o'er her gore-fed plains
Raise warlike altars to admiring Gods,
Till the dread twilight come, ending all worlds.

V. 1048—1076.

All hail the chieftain, and with ardent look
Survey him, high-applauded. Extacy
Thrill'd thro' his ev'ry sense, and in his eyes
Sparkled delight, as mid the joyous host
He mark'd full many a warrior-shape, on earth
Once known in fields of fame, now on whose helms
Shone diadems, their valour's meed. Him soon
A former Danish King, his country's boast,
Of bards the darling theme, himself a son
Of song, whose crowded ships had o'er the main
Spread terror, and with slaughter died each shore,
Regner, great name, approach'd, and by the hand
(Himself announcing) seiz'd the awe-struck chief—
Communing with him strait, the death-chang'd King
Relates, that ere his earthly life expir'd,

Himself had felt the glorious hope to win
With sword and fire England's all-beauteous realms,
Fairest of isles, and lay her people low,
Food for the wolves and eagles, till the land
For Odin had become the favor'd seat,
Perpetual scene of wars, but England's King
Ælla, a foe of savage cruelty,
There held him captive, and by serpent stings
At last assail'd his life. There he had learnt
Fate govern'd all things, and to him forbade
A glory, sole reserv'd by destiny
And will of Gods for Guthrun, honour'd name,
Who these high acts atchieving, should at length
Fall mid the storm of fight, and soon partake
Valhalla's glories, which to win, no pangs,
No earthly suff'rings, were too hard to dure.

High swell'd the living monarch's soul to hear
These words transporting, and in all his thoughts
Conquest then seem'd presag'd; while other dead
Obeisance due and honour to his state
Offer around.

Meantime heav'n's awful Sire
Ascended his empyreal seat: from whence
He moderates the councils of the brave,
And rules their vast assembly. Nor he seem'd
Less than Olympian Jove, when thron'd aloft
'Mid the celestial pow'rs, his awful brows
Nod his unchangeable decrees, and shake
All heav'n.

Majestic to his side he calls

The Danish monarch, and in view of all
Takes from his treasur'd stores coruscant arms,
Cuirass, and helm, hauberk, and pliant mail
Divinely wrought, and to th' adoring gaze
Expands an ostentatious shield, where art
Had every form of warlike terror spread
With matchless dignity. Smooth-flowing greaves
And gauntlets next he brought, and in his grasp
Uplifting all, to the extended arms
Presented of the wond'ring chief, whom awe
And extacy absorb'd, while to his ear
This high injunction came.

"Receive, bold King,
A pledge triumphant of heav'n's high regard,
These glorious, godlike arms, which wear on earth
Intrepid, knowing them to mortal stroke
Invulnerable, till that destin'd time
When to thy conqu'ring host all England's realms
Shall yield o'erpow'r'd, and thou and thine shall spoil
Her rich dominions. Which great task atchiev'd,
Remember ever thy commission'd charge
By sword and fire t' extirpate from her soil
Christ's despicable faith, and in its room
Plant worship of ourselves and full belief
Of all these blissful glories which thine eyes
Have seen, and still shall view. Whence in due time
Fast-spreading like a deluge from the loins
Of the disburthen'd North, this martial faith
Shall all the world convert, and thus embroil
All countries, and all men, in endless wars.

For this high duty be it thy proud meed
At last to fall amid the gory field
Transpierc'd with wounds; thence after death to live V. 1137—1165.
Enroll'd in songs of bards, while borne on high
In my attendant car thy soul shall rise
To these blest regions, and partake these joys,
Till heav'n's last twilight come. Then after worlds
Have sunk in ruin, when ourselves must yield
To our predestin'd foes, thou shalt survive
For ever, high-remov'd to dwell amid
Thy brave companions, fall'n on earthly fields,
In Gimlé's boundless heav'n of light and bliss.
But come: ere thou depart to earth, the feasts
And wars of heroes shall delight thy stay;
And yield a foretaste of thy future joys."

So as he spoke, harmonious music rose,
On wings of extacy from thousand harps
Of heav'nly minstrels: chief from Braga's shell,
The God of song: in liquid concert join'd
By warbling flutes. Signal not unobserv'd;
For at the sound the vast assemblage rose,
And mov'd in order tow'rd the festal hall
Divine, where stretching o'er the sight appear'd
Tables immense with ev'ry dainty spread
Provoking appetite, and luscious mead
Mantling in many a skull of spotless white,
Or golden goblets, foaming broad around.
At equal intervals a Goddess train
Stood of fair Valkyries, waiting th' array

Of mailed heroes at each sumptuous board.
All take their seats, and on a sep'rate throne
High elevate, the universal Sire
Assumes his state; whose spiritual essence needs
Sustenance none, save from th' enlivening fumes
Of heav'n-press'd wine. Swift to his lofty crest
Two ravens fly, Spirit and Memory nam'd,
Wafting the news of all things thro' the world
Passing, while he with fav'ring eye o'erlooks
The genial pleasures of his happy hosts.
These throng'd partake magnificent regale,
Delicious flesh of boars, on earth admir'd,
And quaff at large from deep capacious skulls
Won from the scalps of foes, rich-sparkling mead.
Th' admiring Guthrun all the scene observ'd
Deep-mov'd, and knew all as he heard proclaim'd
In songs of earthly bards. Nor fail'd he then
To join the splendid revelry, and taste
Celestial food, while to his honour'd hand
The Valkyries present a golden cup,
Exclaiming, "Freely drink: no surfeit fear,
Nor vacancy, for from her flowing teats
A fair she-goat high-feeding on the leaves
Of the eternal Hydrasil distils
Each day of hydromel unfailing streams,
Copious to satisfy heav'n's endless hosts."

Mirth crown'd the lavish festival, and swift
Flew the gay time, as bards divine rehears'd
Heroic acts, and sounding music peal'd,

Till at a sign from Odin's lifted hand,
Hark! from afar the piercing cry ascends
Of the ferocious cock, signal of war;
The heroes from their seats start up, and seize
Their arms, all-hast'ning thro' unfolded gates
To the grim fields of fight. Chariots and steeds
Await their coming, and with martial noise
All heav'n resounds, as thronging they advance
In multitudinous phalanxes, led on
Under extended banners to the roar
Of drums and clarions, trumpets, harps, and shouts.

The passing crowds the Danish King pursues,
Burning with eager fury to behold
Their dread, triumphant transports, and congress
Of their embattled legions. To his side
Tyr joins his steps, and both together mount
A high, refulgent chariot, whose ascent
Commanded prospect of the champain scene,
Within whose concave in array were laid
The monarch's armour, Odin's splendid gift.
Them heav'n's almighty father in his car,
Surrounded with celestial moving pomp,
Accompanied: and soon their state arrives
Th' illimitable fields, where swift array'd
In two opposing armies, stood adverse
The blazing wars of heav'n's translated pow'rs.
Nor paus'd: for each innumerable host
Fierce-rushing opposite conjoins afar
Tremendous conflict. Thunder then 'gan roar

Throughout all heav'n. Then shook the solid tow'rs
Of all her cities, and Valhalla rung
Horrible echoes; while the boundless air
Rain'd death, loud-shattering adamantine arms
With dark incumbent ruin. Flaming far,
Chariots all dash'd with gore, and steeds, and shields
In fierce commotion mix, a moment seen,
Till other unrestrain'd destruction whelms
Their jarring tumult. Squadrons heap the plains,
Delug'd with blood. Nor less confusion reigns,
Than if the twilight of the Gods arriv'd,
And all heav'n burst asunder, in mid air
The constellations had together dash'd
Their globes, and desolation roar'd thro' worlds.
So flash'd thick fires, and sanguine torrents roll'd,
Terrible, blasting, as those stormy flames
And poisonous floods, which at the end of time
Fenris by Midgard's side, (reft of their bonds),
Shall from their jaws, wide as the gulph of hell,
Explode o'er heav'n and earth, and deeps of air.
Floating on dark-expanded wings aloft,
The rav'ning vultures came in hideous clouds,
And downward darting tore with piercing screams
The fallen dead, the triumph so to swell
Of victory. Endless were the feats of fame
Atchiev'd on ev'ry hand. Astonishment
And extacies unfelt entranc'd the soul
Of Guthrun, at survey of such great war.
Impatient of controul he seeks to join
The madd'ning conflict, and appease in fight

Intolerable fury. Of whose state
Aware, his partner God (so to restrain
His else ungovern'd rage) tells that ev'n now
Their course must hence depart, and in the midst
Leave this fierce war, for now is come the hour
When tow'rd the earth th' almighty Sire had bade
Their flight descend. The King reluctant hears,
And griev'd, exclaims. "Oh! that predestin'd foes
Were ever doom'd by ruthless fate to end
Glories, and bliss, and pleasures such as these!
Here could I ever stay! My soul exults
To linger here, this place pronouncing good.
Can other extacies e'er these exceed?"
To whom the martial Tyr. "Lament not, chief,
That so eternal destiny has doom'd,
And that these scenes must end: for after Gods
Yield to inevitable death, absorb'd
Into the bosom of Omnipotence,
The brave and bold shall ever live, and share
Glories and bliss unknown, amid th' abodes
Of Gimlé, of whose boundless heav'n thine eyes
Shall, as we pass to earth, a shadowy glimpse
Obtain, whose view shall strait thy sadd'ning mind
Rouse to high courage and deep-fix'd resolves."

He said, and without longer pause directs
The reins of his wing'd coursers to the south,
While Guthrun many a fond, retorted glance
Cast on those happy fields, and gradual mark'd
War's fulgent aspect from the sight retire.

Till near heav'n's southern borders come, behold!
Cerulean regions open on their gaze
Soothing to view; which high-exalted realms
Display'd a third, illimit heav'n above,
From which, (conspicuous thence) the matchless shine
Of Gimlé's glories pierc'd the azure depths
Subjacent, and thro' those far-spreading climes
Shed light and life and bliss. Th' extatic pow'r
Ravish'd th' adoring passengers, and stay'd
Awhile their fervid wheels, but Fate to them
Conceded not more near to pierce abodes,
As yet undwelt of mortal feet. Nor time,
Tho' much desire invited, now allow'd
The beatific transport long to share.
Reluctant thence they turn: and as they bend
Their course reverted tow'rd heav'n's glitt'ring bridge,
The Danish King, with deep regret inspir'd,
Still in his mind the fated enemies
Revolves of heav'n's blest pow'rs: nor fails he then
To his attentive guide meek to unfold
His fix'd desire sometime, ere death, to view
(Escorted thus by some celestial pow'r)
The dreaded foes, where'er they dwell, dispers'd
Throughout creation, if such hope the Gods
Deem not profane for mortal eye. To whose
Request so offer'd strait the martial Tyr
Future compliance promis'd, if dissent
Th' almighty Odin gives not. Swiftly flew
Their buoyant voyage, till discern'd afar
From the fair summit of the burning arch,

The earth unfolds her verd'rous regions, stretch'd
In wide expanse below. Thither their speed
Hastens, and now the chambers of the deep
Were redd'ning with th' approach of dawn, nor yet
The sun had from the orient waves uplift
His golden pomp. O'er many a realm they sail,
Swift on their airy passage caught, and light
At last in view of well-known scenes where war
In long procinct held residence, and camps
Outspread their solemn state. Descending soon
On the firm ground, the Danish monarch fits
To his invigorated limbs the arms
Gift of heav'n's King supreme, and sudden feels
Within him pow'r immense and loftiest thoughts
Disdaining sense of pain, or faint fatigue.
In such array the hero strode along
Tow'rd his own subject camp, full of divine
Ardor, and bade with lifted hand adieu
To the stern God, high-vanishing in air.

ARGUMENT OF BOOK X.

Second general battle of the English and Danish armies. Various incidents. At length Alfred and Guthrun meet in single combat. The Pagan King loses his celestial sword. Victory inclines to the side of the English, who force their enemy's camp, and drive the Danes into Exeter. After the battle, the English females come to meet their friends. The Queen conspicuous among these with her children. The meeting of her and Alfred. The chiefs assemble in the royal tent. Festivities of the English. Council of the Demons. They determine to escort hither to the assistance of the Danes their numerous fleet now lying at Wareham. A messenger arrives to Alfred from Octher the English admiral, announcing that the Danish fleet is about to sail to Exeter: that the admiral has determined to give them battle on their passage: and solicits the presence of Alfred on board the English fleet. He resolves to go. The parting of Alfred and the Queen. To secure the safety of his family, he determines to remove them from the camp to the castle of Anselm, an English chief. Departure of the King to the fleet, and of the Queen and family to their place of retreat.

ALFRED.

BOOK X.

V. 1—19.

NOW virgin morn, attir'd in robe of pearl,
Shook dewdrops from her shadowy hand on flow'rs
Soft-opening to receive the golden rays,
Shot from the hov'ring chariot of the sun.
His broad eye from the ocean-verge beheld
Both armies, on the confines of each camp
Preparing for fierce battle. Either host
Blaz'd far, in aspect various. Marshall'd bright
Under each chief, the English legions stood
In shapes triangular, whose lessening points
Fronted the foe, thick-serried shields along
Presenting barriers impenetrable
On ev'ry side. Proud in the van, between
Each interval, selected chivalry,
Flow'r of the southern regions, mov'd, of youths
Noble and young compos'd, their barbed steeds
Neighing for war. Deep in the rear were throng'd
The hoary ag'd, the priests, the female trains,
With ancient bards, before whose guarded ranks

Vehicles fill'd with martial treasures spread
A moving bulwark. Dreadful was the view,
As all th' illumin'd air with dancing flames
Sparkled, from crested helms and wavy spears
And shields depict with gorgeous heraldry,
Shook in the beams of morn. The streamy locks
Of thousand chiefs broad-floated on the wind,
Like meteors, over which their falchions flash'd,
And battle-axes rose in hideous range,
Where pale Death seem'd to glare. England's best hope,
Her warlike sov'reign on his mantled steed
Unwearied rode from troop to troop, and rous'd
To union high of patriot energy
Each gen'rous feeling. Ev'ry ducal prince
He pass'd, addressing with meet words, of pow'r
To fire each heart with thirst of noblest deeds
And haughty scorn of death: he call'd to mind
Their bleeding country's wrongs: that now the hour
Of her deliv'rance beams at hand, a charge
Trusted to their sole valour, and the meed
Of vict'ry: for the fate of Englishmen
And their sons' sons thro' many a distant age
On this great day depends. Live only then
To conquer, and beneath heav'ns arm, attain
Liberty, glory, honourable peace.

V. 20—48.

Oddune, the bold, a thunderbolt of war,
Artful in stratagem, Devonian men
Led on with answering hearts. Herbert the wise,
Grown grey in fields of fame, his faithful pow'rs,

Choice of Dorsetian plains, compell'd, and bade
All rather perish than their monarch's side
Ignobly quit. Osmund was there, the good,
The gen'rous hero, father, friend, belov'd,
Who his selected train from Cornish fields
Address'd: and bade them still exulting meet
The visage of grim war, and from her front
Pluck glorious triumph. Nor there absent far
Shone Athelard, his son, the father's side
Protecting with his gallant troop, whose heart
Throbb'd high within him, as he heard the voice
Of his dear sov'reign, and big tear-drops stood
In his full eyes. Edric, kind chief, was near,
Ruling the men of Hants, who garrulous
Hearten'd his pow'rs, and bade them imitate
His gen'rous boys, Hianfrid, and the bold
Harold, nor following these thro' scenes of fame
Despise an old man's prowess. Alwin here
Ardent, impetuous, deem'd each moment lost
Which held him from the fight. Rayner all-stern
In his dark armour waited for the fray,
Sparing of words, yet bade his list'ning host,
The pride of Wilts, by deeds alone acquire
Pre-eminence, nor bear to be excell'd.
Oswin, as brave as loyal, with proud joy
Receiv'd the monarch's charge, and rous'd his train
Part from his native vales, part to his sway,
Added since Berthun's mournful fate, to sense
Of noblest temper. Edgar, young and bold,
Burning for fame, invok'd his warrior-troops

T' avenge his brother's death, nor ever see
Vecta's fair isle, till, honour-crown'd, they all
May hail their wives and pleasant homes in peace.

Thus stood the host in mighty cohorts rang'd,
Princes, earls, nobles, potent thanes, and chiefs
Of states, of hundreds, tythings, in degrees
Subordinate, yet leagued in triple vow
To equal each his leader, to avenge
Each other's fate; and victory or death
Win on the field of blood. These in array
Shone like the stars of heav'n, whose glorious trains
Each in his place innumerable rank'd
Under the empire of the regal moon
Shed o'er the cheerless earth comfort and light.

Nor less the Pagan King his gorgeous host,
Rang'd in battalions vast of even line
Immeasurable, with his presence cheer'd.
He in his heav'nly panoply all-arm'd
On his curvetting steed from rank to rank
Rode ardent, and to all enrapt repeats
His wond'rous vision, which the aid of Gods
Assures, by Odin promis'd. As the pledge
Of whose high favor these celestial arms
Adorn'd his life-swell'd limbs, to mortal dint
Impenetrable.
Mute astonishment
Seiz'd ev'ry hearer, and all-fix'd they gaze
Upon their godlike leader: on his arms

They gaze: his mighty shield that like a tow'r
Red in the beams of morning, blaz'd afar:
The flaming cuirass, which his ample breast
Inclos'd in gold, starr'd o'er with gems: his casque
Horrent with gold and sable-streaming hair
Dark'ning its fiery brilliance, as the moon
Appears at full, where some broad eclipse shades
Her struggling radiance, and alarms the night
With ominous terror. Wheresoe'er he turn'd,
Flash'd from him streams of glory. Such his look,
His words, inflam'd his warrior troops to sense
Of savage fury. Terrible they stand,
Revolving death: their swollen eye-balls roll
With living fire. Like tygers; or a horde
Of wolves, that from the cavern'd mountains pour,
When from far fields of battle thro' the air
Rises the scent of blood. His subject train
Oskital fires with hope of victory,
Plunder, and spoil; he animates the fray;
Bids each man emulous support his chief
And imitate his deeds. Amund inspires
His martial squadrons with extatic hope
Of glory, festal joys, and virgins' love.
Haldene ambitious, power and regal sway
Promis'd to conquest's sons. Hubba, dark soul,
Burning with hate and fell revenge at thought
Of Regner his dead father's fate, adjures
His following host by Odin's love, by hope
Of Valhall's bliss, the torments of his sire
To wreak in turn on his proud enemies:

Bids them survey the magic Reafen, wrought
By his prophetic sisters, whose broad folds
Wave high, presaging vict'ry. Kenwulph leads
Reluctant to the war his Mercian train:
Yet bids his troops in battle well perform
Their part, forewarn'd that known revolt will draw
Destruction on them all.
Now thro' the air
The sound of thousand harps confus'd arose,
And bardic songs in dreadful harmony,
While from afar, against each other move
Both armies throng'd in terrible array.
Standards continuous floating, either host
O'ercanopy with starry pomp: the earth
Shakes underneath the tread of armed powers.
Blaze flash'd on blaze reflected, as the hosts
Advance, like clouds on clouds by tropic winds
Compell'd, that charg'd with meteor fires and storms,
Slowly advance to elemental war.
Nor pause is given: leaping with frantic joy,
Shouting aloud the Danish squadrons rush
To battle: thousand arrows all the sky
Darken, while underneath broad-flaming swords
Flash in red circles, as like thunderbolts
The Pagans dart on their expecting foes.
On wings of death opposing javelins fly
In unresisted torrents that o'erwhelm
The ranks of fighting warriors, ev'ry where
Falling in blood. Resounds the vaulted heav'n
With noise: the crash of helmets riv'n; the roar

V. 137—166.

Of battle-axes plung'd on orbed shields:
Tumultuous shouts and songs o'erwhelm the groans
Of dying heroes, while with piercing neighs
The war-steeds trample o'er the heaps of slain.
The dread confusion of that awful war
Was dark and full of terror, as appears
Night to the wilder'd trav'ler, o'er some heath
Urging his haggard way, extended blind
Along the shores of Ocean, who aloft
Dashing his mountainous waves in madden'd storm
Thunders around, and shot thro' opening clouds
Fork'd light'nings, flashing pale, disclose to sight
Horrors unknown, from face of which the moon
Has fled dismay'd and ev'ry twinkling star.

V. 167—195.

Such was the rush of each contending host,
As when along Peruvian coasts, impell'd
By earthquakes, all the vast Pacific rolls
Whelming within its pond'rous dark abyss
Full many a tow'red city, lifting far
Their harbour'd navies o'er the rocking shores,
While many a league the floating carcases
Of delug'd nations strow the roaring waves.
Innumerable were the mighty deeds
Wrought in each adverse host, both undismay'd,
Both rous'd to highest fury. Above them all
Terrible, sight-appalling, Guthrun tow'r'd
In his wide-blazing arms before the van
Of his high-plumed chiefs engag'd in war.
So thro' the northern snows huge Hecla rears

His awful bulk, and from his blazing top
Thro' the long polar night exploding rolls
Pyramids of red fire, that light afar
The ice-heap'd islands, and the tossing seas.
He call'd his troops and led their squadrons on
Invulnerable, furious, where the fight
Rag'd hottest, as the roaming monster prowls
The forest, when the thunder of his voice
Resounds thro' ev'ry cave, as with blind wrath
He tears the quiv'ring earth. The English host
Such rage endur'd not, but deformed rout
Disjoin'd their ranks, and panic flight essay'd
To 'scape resistless ruin. Then aware
The mighty Alfred thro' the thickest war
Press'd, and before his sudden-yielding host,
Oppos'd himself a barrier: like an oak
Shadowing his native hills, and braving all
The whirlwind's savage fury, firm he stood;
And with loud voice call'd back his recreant troops
To battle. They astonish'd felt their hearts
Swell with new courage; rallying, they resume
Their ranks, and on the foe impetuous turn
Forward impell'd, as a broad river, swol'n
With rains and torrents from the hills o'erwhelms
Hamlets and forests in its foamy course.
Then rose the storm of war: the mailed steeds
To battle flew: buckler on buckler drove:
Rank press'd on rank: in hideous conflict join
The warring nations. Then the blaze of steel
Fires all the field. Fierce-bounding from the string

Broad flights of arrows, or wide-flashing spears,
Or rocks on rocks high-slung from mighty arms
Tempest the air. The earth with sanguine floods
Is delug'd. As innumerable came
The messengers of death, as hail-drops fall
Impetuous thro' mid Jove, which all their robes
Dash from autumnal woods. In streaming gore
Sink deep the death-struck warriors, as when trees
O'erthrown by whirlwinds from on high are whelm'd
In agitated waters. Guthrun cheers
His fainting warriors, and perceives his soul
Rais'd by supernal pow'r to certain hope
Of conquest. But the English monarch came:
Came, as o'er rifted rocks a flood descends
In mighty cataract, whose astounding roar
Alarms from far the country. Doubtful now
The contest rests: novel amaze and fear
Reign o'er the field. So dreadful shone the glare
Of obvious-mingling spears, as in the night
A train of meteors o'er the starry vault,
Dazzling the vivid moon, convolv'd arise,
While the awe-shudd'ring people rapt discern
Chariots and armies mix'd in fiery war.
Thro' the grim paths of battle like a God
All-terrible, intrepid, Alfred mov'd,
Where'er he came, from his resistless arm
Scattering destruction. Legions, pressing dense
Between, from sight withdrew and from his reach
Withheld the Danish monarch; else had ris'n
War 'twixt these two, that all the air had rung

With tumult, and astonishment usurp'd
Both armies. Undismay'd the sounding rush
Of huge battalions on battalions pour'd
The English monarch met, and with loud voice
Call'd to his aid his faithful pow'rs. They came
Immediate. Athelard, gen'rous hero, heard
Instant, and with his num'rous followers sought
The scene of danger, nor he brought alone
His friendly pow'rs. For following his steps
The noble Osmund led his ardent host.
So rush'd the sire, as in the forest-glades
When the young lioncel bursts forth enrag'd
Against the toiling hunters, near his path
The brawny lion darts, and marks his course
With fiery-beaming eyes, lest pow'r o'ermatch'd
Surprize his young. So to th' unequal war
Press'd the bold heroes: nor supported thus
Fail'd then the English monarch to repel
All opposition, tho' with numbers swell'd,
As gusts that urge the deep. Onward he drives:
His shouting train pursue. Before them fly,
Or fall beneath their stroke, the adverse pow'rs,
While o'er them irresistible advance
The conqu'rors, as the tide of ocean spreads
His billowy waves o'er deep-embosom'd shores.

V. 256—284.

But not o'er all the champain Vict'ry smiles.
For in the quarter where Hianfrid leads,
Attack'd by hostile numbers, to the foe
The English yield forc'd way. Confusion reigns

Thro' their disorder'd ranks. Perils and death
Surround the youthful chieftain, who that time
Victim to savage frenzy sure had fall'n,
Had not his gen'rous friend, Harold the bold,
Sprung with a martial legion to his aid,
And turn'd the tide of war. So if a storm
Should wreck some hapless vessel on the main,
When clinging to the mast, or dash'd on waves
The scatter'd crew wait only death, at last
Some gallant seaman from the surfed shore
Launches his vent'rous bark, in whose blest womb
He saves the suff'ring, joy-transported throng.
With such relief to his endanger'd friend
The noble Harold came. In other part
The youthful Edgar signally display'd
His daring valour. In the wing where fought
The Mercians now enslav'd, led num'rous on
By Kenwulph their revolted King, whom proud
Ambition to disloyalty seduc'd,
The gallant Edgar rag'd, and with his sword
Fell'd shrinking legions, venting his dread wrath,
As the loud whirlwind o'er the forest flies,
Ungovernably fierce, when mightiest oaks,
The growth of ages, groan and sink to earth.
Near whose destructive steps Rayner, all-stern,
Collected in his fury, press'd, and hurl'd
Numbers to ruthless fate. His open'd course
Led him ere long where by his regal crown
Conspicuous, Kenwulph to the fiercest war
Rush'd. But before his meditated path

Rayner oppos'd himself. Soon as the King
Beholding recogniz'd his former friend,
Fix'd in amaze he like a statue stood;
Chill tremors seiz'd his limbs: his palsied nerves
Convulsive shook, till downward to the ground
Dropt his too cumb'rous sword. With eye unmov'd
Gazing he staid, and visage deadly-pale.

Rayner himself too trembled: shudd'ring awe
Involuntary seiz'd his manly heart:
His outstretch'd arm lost then all pow'r to guide
Its quivering weapon. Solemn silence held
Awhile both heroes, till th' affecting pause
At length with speech abash'd thus Kenwulph broke.

"O Rayner, friend belov'd:—if yet that name
Thou can'st from me endure.—But no! my doom
Decrees my punishment, and I submit—
Thou wilt not hear that sacred name profan'd.
Enemy then, yet dearest to my heart,
I shrink not from thy presence; for I see
Just heav'n in vengeance sends me to thy arm,
A willing victim—Lo! I bare my breast!—
Strike; slay me instant: sweet will be my death,
Perishing by thy hand; for I am sunk
In wretchedness. Take then a weary life
That cumbers its possessor, who could once
For the vain shade of titled pow'r forsake
Thee, every friend, my King, my country's cause!"

To whom thus Rayner, sighing deep, replied.
" Oh! miserable man! this shudd'ring arm
Can slay thee never. Live: but while thy life
Endures, oh! cherish of thy former friends
Remembrance meet, that sorrow in thy heart
May work some better change, and all thy pow'rs
May to the paths of duty yet return."

To whom the Mercian King. " Too generous chief!
Rayner, dear name! ah! add not to the stings
Already in my heart daggers more keen.
That shame I could not brook. Think with what face
I could behold my former friends, whom I
Once basely had deserted.—To your side
I never can return.. End then a life
Hostile to you, to England and her friends.
Else will I perish in this storm of war,
Fighting enforc'd against my countrymen,
Unless in some dark moment of despair
My own hand turn upon my guilty breast."

He ceas'd, and longer conference had held
These pristine friends, had not with thund'ring roar
The troops of gallant Edgar to th' affray
Rush'd opposite, and 'gainst the Mercian host
Effus'd their direst vengeance, to whose aid
Turn'd then th' impatient Kenwulph, and with pow'r
Essay'd to ward the desolating rage
Of the infuriate English. As a rock
Meets in mid way th' impetuous torrent's force,

While round it boil the madd'ning surges, toss'd
In foamy tumult; so the fearless King
Oppos'd th' impetuous legion of the foe
That on his people pour'd. Yet vainly thus
Defended: thro' their ranks confusion reigns,
And whelm'd in irresistible uproar
The Mercians fall unnumber'd, or in flight
Seek refuge from the death which their own hearts,
Already weak, and banded in a cause
Unjust, expect not to evade.
And now
O'er all the field the Pagan nations meet
Dismay and foul defeat. Of which reverse
Aware, the watchful demons high in air
Confer, assembled, counselling what aid
Occasion needs the fortune of the field
Swift to their favor'd people to restore.
With eager ken all downward gaze, and mark
The deathful scene, eyeing the sea of war;
In what part most the conflict rag'd, and where
Press'd the chief heroes. Such their awful view,
As when a dauntless trav'ler on the heights
Of lofty Cotopaxi, or the top
Of Chimborazzo, where the Andes stretch
Their endless chain, surveys amaz'd below
A sea of clouds rounding th' enormous steep,
Extoll'd like some huge island to the sky;
Where light'nings flash beneath, and o'er the earth
Impetuous thunders vent their sulph'rous rage.
So these. Descending then, the shadowy shapes

Mix in the tumult of the fight, and oft
To sight reveal'd in the war-cinctur'd form
Of Goddess Valkyries, or else unseen,
Voices than mortal more from hov'ring clouds
Exploded, instigate to rage renew'd
The Pagan chiefs. At such dread bidding mov'd,
Fierce Hubba led his fiery-darting troops
Amid that quarter of the field, where still
Unterrified, the English monarch rag'd
Hurling pernicious fury thro' the host
Of enemies. Chief this part woke the fears
Of the grim pow'rs of death. They saw aghast,
How from before his arm by thousands fled
His adversaries, palsied at his look.
Death marks his course, and tumult, and affright,
And horror, desolating as the blast,
The suffocating Samiel or Simoom,
Blown o'er Arabia's wilds, at whose fell breath
Sky-dark'ning sandy whirlwinds, whelm at once
The passing caravans: when prostrate hosts
Of merchants, pilgrims, camels, sink in death,
And their stiff corses strew the sultry wastes.
Such ruin, such a foe, t' oppose, the Danes
As by involuntary impulse urg'd
Rush flocking; Hubba's savage nations first,
Not far remote. With like emotion fir'd,
The furious Haldene leads his ardent troops,
Uniting all their prowess to withstand
The English warrior's unresisted wrath,
Whose high example to enthusiasm fir'd

His wond'ring people. But th' aggression new
Of congregated legions, fir'd with rage
Infernal, turns the tide of war. Awhile
Wavers the scale of vict'ry. Full long
The sov'reign sole endures the hot assault
Of the barbarian hordes. His zealous aid
The vet'ran Herbert to his side adduc'd,
Prudent and calm: but ineffectual now
Had prov'd all mortal valour to withstand
Enemies so inflam'd, or to avert
Hideous destruction.

V. 451—458.

Of which doom aware,
Th' angelic pow'rs, high-hov'ring in mid sky,
Survey the battle; on the English King,
Supporting that tremendous scene, they bend
Their looks of heav'nly love, sublim'd with awe;
As when on Ætna's high-uplifted top
The godlike Plato stood, and thence beheld
(In holy admiration deep-absorb'd)
The sun ascending o'er the golden waves,
Illumining afar the ocean, stretch'd
In wide infinity. Nor then delay'd
The sons of heav'n amid the dreadful war
Prompt to descend, and as they wing their course,
Lament with pity of superior reason
Effect so sad of human enmity
Wasting the earth with energies misus'd.
" Terrible is yon scene. Alas! that men
(So passing spoke heav'n's radiant ministers)
Brothers, whom universal peace should bind

In social union, state then like our heav'n,
Their theatre of trial should transform
Into a hell, where furious discord reigns,
And ev'ry vulture passion tears the soul!
All pass but to one grave. Why then delight
Men in each other's path to scatter thorns?
Why rather not the rose of peace and love?
So heav'n-born truth would tell. Which o'er the world
Once full-believ'd, abhorred war shall end."

So said, before the English sov'reign, (friend
And warm defender of celestial truth)
A glorious band approach, of order high.
The train of heav'nly beings, o'er his head
Hov'ring, with sway of pow'r divine repel
The storm of weapons that from ev'ry side
Show'r'd, and the flashing falchions which around
Press'd to destroy. From mid a radiant cloud
Soon to the view reveal'd, where fair he sat
Inspher'd, a shape divine in argent robe
Cinctur'd with a cerulean zone, appears.
Love on his count'nance shone. His orient hand,
Soft as a dewy beam that o'er the sky
Streams from the sun at eve, he calm outstretch'd,
And touch'd th' adoring monarch. Form more fair,
Shone never Phœbus, God of light and song,
Nor the chaste Empress of the silver bow,
Nor the sweet Goddess of the loves and smiles,
When amid fields of fame their presence cheer'd
Pelides, or the favor'd chiefs of Troy.

Celestial influence thro' the hero thrill'd,
As words of sound harmonious broke the air.

" Celestial favorite, thy glorious cause
Angelic natures with their pow'r befriend.
Fear not the numbers of the foe. The day
Is not yet spent; and ere yon sun descend,
Thy arms shall wrest the dubious victory."

Alike in other regions of the field
The heav'nly throng, apparent, or by voice
Mysterious, summon to the dang'rous fight
The chiefest warriors: thro' their souls inspiring
Undaunted hope, and renovated pow'r.
Nor here their labour rests: for on the Danes,
Unveiling thro' the air their sun-bright shapes,
Sudden they flash intolerable day:
The blaze of splendor, dazzling all the air,
O'erpow'rs their darken'd gaze. Then 'mid his host
Th' inspired Alfred o'er the field atchieves
Prodigies of high prowess. Swift they turn
The tide of battle and thro' hot uproar
Drive their fierce foes in clamorous pursuit.
All Denmark fled. Innumerable fall
Battalions, whelm'd amid a sea of gore.
Death universal reigns. On either side
Sunk then full many a hero, whom the Muse
Fails to recount. Amid the English host
The gallant Octa fell: a beauteous youth,
Of virgins lov'd; nor mid that war avail'd

The wavy splendor of his yellow hair,
Which, dropp'd with blood, o'erspread his burnish'd mail,
Like rubies glitt'ring among gold and pearls.
Victim less fair that Hyacinthine boy
Lov'd of Apollo, whom by sad mischance
Slain as they play'd thro' jealous Zephyr's rage,
From his empurpling blood th' enamour'd God
Bid violets spring, and with their Tyrian hue
Oft sooth'd his melting soul to mild regret
For his lost favorite. Beneath the stroke
Of Guthrun, Colbert fell, a Cornish thane,
Rich in possessions. Him the Danish King
Mark'd, as he rush'd along in fierce pursuit:
And proud-incens'd, forth issuing from his host
Slew at a blow; then dragg'd the falling corse
After him, as th' enormous crocodile
Springs from the water'd bank of some low isle
On man or beast: then with his hapless prey
Gradually disappears in foamy waves.
Then, Morval, too thy glory set, a chief
Condemn'd to fall by Amund's flying spear.
Dear to the sons of fame, the bards shall sing
Thy gen'rous temper thro' thy valley's halls,
Vacant of thee for ever. Thy fair wife
Will wail thy loss, as the lone Philomel
Enamours with her grief the tranced night.
Nor then their tow'r-like shields from death preserv'd
Full many noble Danes: for as their flight
Measur'd the deathful field, the bounding steeds
After them thunder'd. They with headlong force

V. 518—547.

Whelm'd o'er the plain in strong convulsions grasp
The earth with dying hands. O'er them their foes
Indissoluble, unresisted, rush,
A stormy deluge; fierce-expanded hoofs
Fly o'er re-echoing arms, and heaps of slain. V. 548—576.

Terribly o'er the field the English fire
Each other to tremendous deeds. Beside
The monarch's side, where dealing wonders fought
The gallant Athelard, Oddune the brave
Shouting address'd him: bade him that high post
Maintain, tho' in his country's cause he fall.
Alas! well nigh predicted. As he spoke
A pond'rous spear from Guthrun's hand transpierc'd
His shield and glitt'ring corslet. From the wound
Issued a sanguine stream. Backward he shrunk
Awhile; around him throng'd his shudd'ring train.
That chance the English monarch saw, and felt
His bosom swell with deep regret, for dear
In his esteem th' heroic youth he held.
His course he stay'd not, but incens'd with rage
Rush'd onward: opening his terrific way
Thro' flying foes, he came at last, where seen
From far, the Danish King with haughty words
Rallied in vain his all-disorder'd troops.
But who shall paint the terrors that arose,
When to oppose each other furious flew
Both monarchs, with loud tumult and uproar,
Nor less than if two piny rocks below
By earthquakes agitated should collapse

In ruins. From around them swift retire
Th' astonish'd multitudes. No word delays
Th' impetuous conflict. Each assails his foe
Insufferably fierce. Their obvious steeds
High-plunging shock with awful pow'r. Both dash
Together their deep-sounding shields, or hurl
With steadfast arm their massy-quiv'ring spears,
Or wave the light'ning of their fiery swords,
That fall with pow'r on helm, and shield, and mail;
But long in vain the English chieftain smote
The Dane's invulnerable arms, nor less
Th' exulting Pagan on his wond'ring foe
Darted in vain his black revenge; uncrown'd
With hop'd success. Whether above some hand
Celestial, or his own diviner skill,
Urg'd from the Christian King the strokes of death,
On whom as with fresh fury sprung aloft
The Danish war-horse, in his mailed breast
The English monarch plung'd a spear. With pain
Snorting, fell backward from on high the steed,
And falling, from his lofty seat expell'd
His armed lord. He to the gory ground
With tumult sunk: loud-roar'd his shatter'd arms:
While from his pow'rless hand, faint-graspe, flew
His sword, celestial gift. Him thus unarm'd
The tow'ring victor saw, stretch'd huge along
The bloody earth, yet fail'd to strike. He seem'd
Like some rock-lifted beacon, which from far
Mariners oft have deem'd the rising moon,
When whelm'd at last in a resistless storm
It falls, and ruinous spreads the delug'd strand.

To prove his pow'r, the English sov'reign calm
Seiz'd with his spear his adversary's sword,
Where the hilt meets the glitt'ring blade, and high
Uplifting, grasps it in his own mail'd hand.
Then the fall'n King fatigue or frantic fear
Had sore oppress'd, tho' cas'd in pond'rous arms,
Invulnerable of mortal stroke, unless
Ætherial spirits, friendly to his cause,
Had to his aid descended. They aware
Of his mishap, in a thick cloudy veil
Shroud, and from pressure of his enemy
Withdraw him. High amid the passive air
They bear him, gliding without step, above
His routed legions, to a safe retreat.
Nor this suffic'd: for o'er the conqu'ring host
(To stay th' impetuous torrent of pursuit)
Th' infuriate fiends hurl down all premature
Clouds of thick darkness. But in vain. Pursuit
Delays not. Thro' the robe of sentient night
Press the triumphant English on their foes.
Tumult, and disarray, and flight, and fear
Usurp in anarchy the fatal field.
The flying victims yield to certain fate.
Pale consternation stalks aghast amid
The vanquish'd army, while behind with rage
The shouting victors throng. Loud sounds the surge
Of blood. High over heav'n dark-moving clouds,
Heap'd vast by many a dim o'ershadowing arm
Spread like an universal shroud of death;
O'er which at times a blaze of dreadful light,

V. 608—637.

By angel pow'rs effus'd, with meteor flash
Struggles, the terrors of that dismal war
Awful-augmenting. But no terrors stay
Th' infuriate conqu'rors. O'er the champain wide
They drive the adverse nations with alarm,
Implacable, insatiate. These recede
Back on their wide-stretch'd camp. But such confines
Not intercept their stern pursuers. They
O'er lofty mounds and deep intrenchments urge
Their clam'rous passage: and the hostile camp
Invade with fierce assault. Which gain'd, ere long
O'er prost'rate tents and altars huge o'erthrown
They chase th' astonish'd Danes. Nor these at last
Find refuge, till thro' Exham's tow'red walls,
Flying, they choke in crowds th' expanded gates.
Here shrieks of women agonize the air
Who fir'd with horrid frenzy, instigate
Their husbands, lovers, to renew the fight,
Back to return, or here to stand and die.
In vain: the Danish legions, struck with fear
Unwont, seek only to escape. Behind
Destruction urges: and throughout their host
Disorder blind prevails and rout. Who gain
The town, return no more. Full many fly
In wild confusion o'er the distant plains,
Scouring the country, that pursuit is vain.

V. 631—666.

With slaughter tir'd, at last the English hosts
O'er all the Danish camp range unoppos'd:
Some o'er the field of fight retrace their way.

Vict'ry elates their crest. With haughty stride
They mark the champain, strown with dead, where bleed
Their foes, their countrymen; and unappall'd
They see around a sanguine ocean roll
In torrents. Far thro' heaps of slaughter press'd
The purple flood, as the deep Ganges winds
In India's solemn wilds his mighty course,
And thro' incumbent hills a passage broad
Impetuous opens, where Himmeleh lifts
Her hoary rocks; receiving in his waves
(Believ'd divine) the consecrated dead,
From many a distant region. The dread scene
Thro' many a noble heart now sadly woke
The sigh of deep regret, while to the soul
Press'd the remembrance of both hosts, so late
Glorious and pow'rful, with effulgent blaze
Of warlike splendor moving to the fight,
Now prost'rate thus in ruins. Such the scene,
As where amid the eastern climes arose
Palmira's far-fam'd glories, to whose seats
The richest caravans of empires throng'd,
Spreading o'er Europe's nations wealth and state;
Yet now have sunk her gorgeous palaces,
Her dome-roof'd fanes, her solemn porticos,
Whose marble monuments along the plains
Fall'n in superb confusion far around,
Lost in mute awe, the ling'ring traveller views.

V. 667—695.

Now Hesper on the twilight's dewy front
Had hung his silver orb. With musing thoughts

That from impetuous tumult gradual sunk
To calm composure, the predominant host
Possess the adverse camp, designing here
To fix their martial residence, and hold
Their foes within the town in strict blockade. V. 696—724.

Now near the outskirts of the camp appear
A beauteous female throng, virgins, and wives,
Longing to meet their lovers, husbands, safe,
While bards with choral harmony attune
Loud hymns of victory. Before them all
Conspicuous, England's grace, her honour'd Queen,
Conducts the bright procession. In each hand
She leads a blooming son: this, Edward, doom'd
One day to reign and imitate his sire
In kingly dignity: that, Ethelward,
Heir of his father's love for learned arts.
Near her a noble matron in her arms
Bore the Queen's infant hope, a daughter fair,
That Ethelfleda, who one day shall fill
Her father's throne, and to th' admiring world
Proclaim a portion of his soul her own.
From far the conscious monarch ey'd the scene,
As he most active tow'rd the hostile tents
Pass'd, and collected from the fields of fame
His countrymen triumphant. At the sight
Rapturous joy thrill'd all his frame. A crowd
Of high sensations swell'd his soul, as he
The King, the Gen'ral, husband, father, saw
All to himself and to his host most dear.

Transcendent beauty then his royal spouse
Seem'd to adorn. Majesty in her air
Blended with ev'ry softer grace, and love
Pure, unaffected, shone. Such she appear'd
As when the moon amid her train of stars
Walks o'er the wood-crown'd hills some cloudless night,
And on the bosom of the streamy vale
Beams gold, and whispers peace. Luxuriant wav'd
Her dark-brown tresses o'er her flowing robes.
Her blue eyes sparkled from afar. The bloom,
Thrown o'er the iv'ry whiteness of her cheeks
Glow'd, as the wild-rose thro' her dewy leaves
Bends blushing o'er the snowy hawthorn flow'r.
An angel smile o'er her fair features play'd.
Her gently swelling bosom, which a zone
Bound, yet its tender tumult scarce restrain'd,
Seem'd like a playful lamb, whose silky neck
The shepherds wreathe with garlands of fresh buds.
So she approach'd in matchless dignity
Between her beauteous offspring, with more grace
Than the swan boasts, when o'er the glassy lake
Regal in majesty she sails along
Between her cygnet train, and with arch'd neck
Proudly beholds their shadows imag'd there.

V. 725—753.

Full soon the monarch-husband from his steed
Descended: her, his solace and delight,
He sought, where mid her train of noble dames
Half-compass'd round, she came. Soon in his arms
Fondly he clasp'd her, and her vermeil lips

Press'd with a holy kiss. She o'er his neck
Tenderly hung. Expressive silence spoke
Her full heart's feelings. Smiles of extacy
Illum'd her face, and from each glist'ning eye
Roll'd o'er her cheeks rapture's delicious tears.
Gently he rais'd her, and with soothing voice
ddress'd. "Oh! dearest, loveliest, best, again
av'n to thy arms restores me. I once more
, my soul's better part, possess, and these
ledges of thy virtuous love, for whom
eel no higher wish than to behold
Each rise the pattern of thyself. But see!
Victory smiles o'er all this glorious host:
Heav'n has their zeal in their dear country's cause
Blest, and ere long will crown with full reward,
That all our woes shall end. Adored peace
Shall heal our country's wounds: and ev'ry man
Shall sooth his age in his own quiet home.
Come: hush each fear: be happy: this proud night
We give to joy." He spoke: then in his arms
Lifted his lovely boys: whose blooming cheeks
He press'd to his warm lips: and to heav'n's care
Blessing commended each, while both at once
With lisping prattle welcome his return.
Nor the last gift of his delighted spouse
Innocent smiling in the nurse's arms
Pass'd he unnotic'd, but with finger soft
Touch'd her fair features, in whose op'ning grace
He trac'd the likeness of the parent flow'r.
The Queen with fondness mark'd his kind regard,

And, calm'd to sweet composure, spon with voice
Musical as a shepherd's distant flute
Warbles along a valley-parting stream,
Utters in accents meek her conscious joy,
And gratitude to heav'n. Th' observant throng
Melt at the scene affectionate and feel
Their hearts subdued with tenderness. The King
Brooks not delay; but leading in one hand
A sportive boy, the other to his spouse
Extended, who with equal transport led
Her other youthful charge, them to the camp
Conducted thus. Bards as they move along
Sound graceful harmony. All at the tents
Swiftly arrive.
And now from ev'ry side
Obedient of command, the scatter'd host
Came flocking. Thro' their adversaries' camp
They pass, admiring all its strange array,
Solemn-appearing as the brighter moon
Shed o'er the scene her shadowy beams. They mark
Huge altars rear'd to fabled Deities;
And store immense of plunder, cattle, steeds,
And forage torn from many a wasted farm.
Joy throbb'd within them, as they now release
A captive throng of fellow-warriors, lost
In pristine battles, here to tents or trees
Tied by ignoble bonds, and doom'd ere long
Victims of sacrifice to bloody Gods.
Treasures they find of costly arms, and store
Of luscious mead, and wines, and viands rich,

Wild-boars, and deer, and sav'ry flesh. The host
Exults aloud. The glitt'ring domes are fill'd.
Rapture succeeds thro' ev'ry tent and spreads
Long its extatic sway, while many a wife
Or tender mistress to her bosom press'd
Her hero safe, and in her smiles receiv'd
The dearest meed of vict'ry. Ev'n the hearts
That now receiv'd their treasures pale with wounds,
Or learnt them left on glory's purple bed,
Felt grief's keen anguish sooth'd to mild regret,
Amid the sympathy of gen'ral joy
Beaming on ev'ry face. Such tender care
The females fond dispense, as when a storm
Has roar'd along the fiery heav'n, and rains
Have dash'd impetuous thro' the bending woods,
The sun restor'd, the birds their shatter'd nests
Amid the dripping foliage glad compose,
And shield their young beneath their glitt'ring wings.

V. 814—842.

Within the royal tent the chiefs convene,
Where all with grateful joy the monarch meets.
The deeds of each he praises, by his note
Distinguish'd to high honour. Osmund, thee
Proudly he greeted. And, young Athelard, thee
Pale with thy wounds, yet anxious to appear
And prove thyself still safe, with cordial warmth
Thy King receives. The regal family
All of thy state enquire: the female part
(Deem'd then their sacred office) to thy wounds
Attend. Such care affectionate then shew'd

The monarch's sister, Burthred's widow'd Queen,
That from thy heart, o'erlooking station, pass'd
A sigh of softest birth: yet to thyself
Then scarce reveal'd. Herbert too, vet'ran chief,
Prudent as brave, had from the sov'reign's voice
His meed of thanks. Nor Rayner, thee, grave chief,
Majestic in thy stern composure, fail'd
The monarch to applaud. Nor Harold, thee,
Bold youth; nor noble, loyal Oddune, thee;
Nor many a valiant thane of humbler note,
Whose deeds deserv'd renown. Then to secure
Advantages thus gain'd, the King consults
With his prime chiefs: fervent he recommends
Order and vigilance: and deems it best
To fix their station in the new-won camp
And fortify its bounds, lest from the town
Impetuous sallies force their envied post.
Hither their own wide camp and warlike stores
Swift to remove; and by the tow'red walls
Of Exham and along the banks of Exe
To range a strong blockade, whence to prevent
The foe's supplies, or ev'n at season due
Assail the city with intrepid storm.

These plans agreed, and soon to chosen hands
Trusted to execute, the royal feast
Begins: delicious viands o'er the board
And cheering wines pass round. The female throng
Wake mirth refin'd. Truest affection beams
In many a face. The virgins with fix'd look

And sweetest smile reward the youths they love.
Reigns universal pleasure. Bards resound
In solemn chorus music's awful pomp,
Swelling the soul with mem'ry of the brave
Or melting ev'ry heart in tender airs,
Image of whisp'ring love. Thus wan'd their hours.
Nor less thro' all the camp the common feast
Spreads its reviving stores on ev'ry board.
Harps wake entrancing melodies: the night
Wears on apace; and pain and sorrow sooth'd
Resign their pow'r, while in each tent prevails
High converse of the fight, and each bold deed
There witness'd, earnest of blest note that soon
England shall see all her best hopes atchiev'd.

Now night with silent hand had rais'd the stars
To their meridian height, and the wan moon
With duskier orb descending, broader shades
Mov'd o'er the earth: when weariness at last
Breath'd thro' the host desire of soft repose.
All seek th' expected couch, where soon kind sleep
Whisp'ring propitious dreams hush'd ev'ry sense
To peace, and from his balmy pinions shook
Unwonted vigour into o'erwatch'd limbs.

But not at peace thro' the still night remain
The shadowy pow'rs of darkness. They enrag'd
At sight of those triumphant whom they hate,
And their own favor'd host thus from their camp
Expell'd and shut within the walled town,

Assemble in mid air, and there confer
Hideous designs, brooding malignity,
Each height'ning other: and what remedy
Counselling must repair so dire defeat.
O'erlooking the wide scene, some gaze afar
With disincumber'd ken tow'rd Wareham's shores,
Where rides the Danish fleet, preparing now
Thence to depart, and join their country's bands
Where the deep Exe his ample harbour spreads.
Joy at the sight inflames th' infernal crew,
And hope re-animates; for now they deem
Innumerous aids, unwearied yet in fight,
Shall soon arrive, whose pow'r conjunct shall turn
The fate of war, and to the side they love
Assure proud vict'ry. Nor they pause: at once
Full many a grizly troop, involv'd in clouds,
Rolls afar off, with purpose to escort
Hither the Pagan ships, and from their course
Ward danger, whether tempest, war, or guile.
Others o'er Exham's stately tow'rs repair,
To mark the routed host, who thro' the night,
Restless and burning with malignant rage,
Labour from inroads new to guard their post
Or meditate fresh battles with the foe,
As prompt occasion serves. Their active toil
The demon pow'rs encourage with what aid
Seems best: observant of their pray'rs, and oft
In shape divine apparent, or with charm
Of heav'nly voice rousing the feebler soul.

Thus fled the darken'd hours: till in the east
The breaking dawn appear'd, before whose steps
Vanish'd the stars, and ev'ry green hill top,
Blushing in orient lustre, wav'd his woods
O'erhung with silv'ry dews. Scarce had the lark
Ris'n from his grassy nest to greet on high
The gold-emerging sun, and with his note
Awoke thro' ev'ry grove the sleeping birds
To join their matin music, ere arose
The English host: but to no cheerful task.
For now alas! the heroes, fall'n in fight,
Await the last due rites, needing the hand
Of friends yet spar'd to give their cold remains
A decent tomb. Slow, solemn, o'er the field
Bestrown with dead, a long procession moves;
The sacred priests, bards in their flowing robes,
Mail'd heroes, and a weeping female train.
The last sad rites are paid: from tomb to tomb
Religion's ministers the pious pray'r
Offer to heav'n: the harp's symphonious tone
Profanes with no rude touch the mingled sigh;
And, breath'd around, the melancholy hymn
From many an eye evokes grief's holy drops.
Then many a matron from the lips she lov'd
Takes her last kiss, or o'er her Hero dead
Droops the lorn virgin. On th' extensive plain
The host congest high mounds, and raise with toil
Huge monuments of stones, whose upright bulk
May point to after times the scene of fight.

V. 929—957.

Them while these cares employ, lo! o'er the plain
Borne on a hasty steed, and in his hand
Bearing the naval flag, a chief arrives
Of valiant mention, Arnulph nam'd, dispatch'd
On message high from the bold admiral
Ruling the English fleet. He seeks direct
The King, whom found, the noble messenger
High in his master's love, nor wanting sway
In his own ship, Alfred remembers well
And greets with cordial welcome. He unfolds
His embassy.

" From England's admiral,
Octher, bold name, intrepid as discreet,
I come, and to my honour'd sov'reign bear
Intelligence, that now the foe prepares
To waft his num'rous fleet from Wareham's shores
Tow'rd Exham's war-girt port, there to unite
The aid of his throng'd crews in works of death.
Their sails are set. Brave Octher has resolv'd
To give them battle, and pursue their flight
With his own ships, now hov'ring on their rear.
But deems himself to so advent'rous task
Unequal; such, so num'rous, so inur'd
To seas, and storms, and naval war, so fill'd
With desp'rate crews, intent on spoil or death,
That his own weaker fleet, in numbers far
Inferior, and with seamen ill supply'd,
Scarce his best hope holds competent to meet
A foe so pow'rful. Some great spur must lend
New spirit, that shall aid the lack of strength.

Nor less, than that he deems, the King himself
Should on this great occasion to the fleet
Transfer his presence and advice (so long
Trusting the army to his vet'ran chiefs)
Whence vigour, courage, not to be surpass'd
All would imbibe, when they their voyage knew
Under the great command of him, whom all
Proclaim the founder of the present fleet
England can boast; until his genius taught,
Unconscious such a pow'r could aught avail.
Himself, to whom the glory is most due,
Should therefore share it, if they hope success.
If not, his skill may mitigate and sooth
The shame and ruin of the worst defeat.
A ship by Wareham's port awaits to bear
The monarch to the fleet."
He in his mind
Ponders the new request: then summons strait
A council of his chiefs, to whom he opes
The message, and his own delib'rate wish
To yield compliance. When their full applause
Sanctions his resolution, to their zeal
The sov'reign thus: "I go then: and will aid,
(If so my presence can) with all my pow'r
Our new-form'd fleet. While absent I remain,
Herbert and Osmund, wise and valiant chiefs,
Shall o'er the army rule with equal sway,
And to its wants attend. For not to me
It rests unknown, nor often without grief
Revolv'd, how weak a fleet our sea-girt realm

Can boast her own, her vessels mean in size,
Her mariners unskill'd. Our navy yet
Pines in its infancy, tho' Britain lifts
Thro' waves her harbour'd isle, and nature points
With plain unerring finger to the sea
As to her element, her native guard.
Yet if my soul prophetic darts aright
Into the bosom of yet future years,
The time shall come, when not a country wash'd
By the green ocean, but shall see with joy
England's white sails and red-cross banners wave;
When over ev'ry sea her fleets shall waft
Her commerce and her arts, to cheer, to bless,
Discovering climes as yet save of the sun
Unvisited. Returning big with wealth,
Plenty, and pomp, the treasures of the world,
Or hurling thunder on her envious foes,
Around her shall her countless navies glide,
Like proud swans guarding their own native isle,
Till all lands own her mistress of the main."

Thus as he spoke, a radiant lustre seem'd
To play around him, and he look'd a form
Than mortal more. Entranc'd, his hearers clash
Their shields for joy. With deep emotion fir'd,
All to their much-lov'd King meekly approach,
And solemn-bending touch his shield with spears
In sign of fealty. Nor did not then
The thoughtful sov'reign long reflect how best
To leave the host in posture of defence,

How safest ward the dangers he foresaw
Of many a desp'rate sally from the town.
Then thro' his soul affectionate arose
A thought of his lov'd wife, and offspring dear,
Mix'd with alarm. Perilous still he deems
The station of the host, and with kind care
Provident, now resolves from troubled scenes
Of battle to remove the female train
To some more safe retreat. His thought he tells
To his assembled warriors, to convey
His own lov'd household to the castled halls
Of Anselm, hospitable thane, whose scite
O'erlook'd the windings of a distant vale.
Then to the chiefs, Herbert and Osmund, adds
Instructions meet to rule with order due
The army, while the ships his presence claim.

These cares arrang'd, the King the council ends,
And now preparing to depart, seeks first
The royal tent. Within its spacious dome
He finds his lovely family: the Queen,
His boys beside her playing, and with these
His widow'd sister. On her lap the Queen
Her infant daughter held, and fond caressing
Soft to her bosom press'd. The boys in sport
Had deck'd themselves in military dress;
One half-conceal'd under a high-plum'd helm,
Whose streaming hair wav'd o'er him, walk'd with pain,
Poising a spear. The other o'er his breast
Bore a broad corslet, and in vain essay'd

To twang a bow that mock'd his little hands.
Their mother mark'd their play, and oft with smiles
Bade them desist; unheeded, or with looks
Of asking innocence, won to assent.

The father near him takes his boys, and soon
Seated beside his consort, gradual tells,
In gentle tone, soothing her wak'd alarm,
Mild as the dove coos whisp'ring to his mate,
His purpos'd expedition, and intent
Herself and these his family from scenes
Of danger, now too imminent, to lead
To a more safe retreat. Surprize, distress,
Contending in her bosom, from her cheeks
Bade the bloom vanish, and a saintly pale
Spread o'er her face, as twilight's grey approach
Drives from the western heav'n its purple clouds.
At last these words found way. "My honour'd lord,
My love, my husband, dearer far than life,
Wilt thou then leave me? Am I to forego
Thy presence? How shall I exist, forlorn
Of thee? Thee absent amid perils, storms,
And battles on the loud, remorseless deep,
To thee unwont: oppos'd against a foe
Bred on the savage element, inur'd
To tempests and destruction, in his pow'r
As in his numbers matchless. Oh! my heart
Prophetic tells me, if thou go'st, I now
Gaze on thee the last time. Oh! I perceive
All places then alike will seem to me

Pregnant with horror. England will contain
No safety. Desolation, wars, and death,
Will overrun her realm. Slav'ry, and spoil
Stalk o'er the land uncheck'd."
She stopt, but soon
Her earnest voice renew'd. "Reflect, my love,
On all that thou hast done. Consider well
All that in fondest hour thou oft hast told me
Remains thee yet to do. What hopes sublime,
Born with thyself, ask their own father's hand
To rear them. Wilt thou go, while yet the course
Of vict'ry leads thee to thy dearest aims,
And plunge in death amid the perilous main?
For sure thou wilt be lost; and then in thee
England is lost for ever. All her hopes
That gild with beams of light these gloomy hours,
Will sink in darkness, like the grave's. Myself
A widow, like thy sister; and these babes,
Dear to us both, whom often in his arms
Their father took and tenderly carest,
Fatherless orphans, and of ev'ry ruffian
The cruel sport. Their father then will lie
In the cold bosom of the sea, or led
Captive perhaps to foreign climes, whom then
Not England's wealth can ransom, or prevent
By ignominious tortures to expire.—
Oh! my soul sickens, as pale fancy lifts
These horrible presentments to my view.
Without thee nothing can proceed. On thee
Alone, thy country's dawning comfort rests.

Quit then intents so dreadful-wild."—
She paus'd,
O'ercome with deep emotion: yet with look
Of pleading beauty, as her heart would break,
Gaz'd in his face; his purpose still she deem'd
Unshaken: and resum'd
"I fear thee firm.
But if thou wilt go, and thy fixed thoughts
Brook not opposure of a woman's will,
Yet hear my pray'r. Once there were hours, my love,
When what I wish'd could never be denied.
Oh! if I ever listen'd to thy talk,
If, won, I ever at the altar call'd
Thee husband, owning thee my bosom's lord,
If I have been the mother of thy babes,
Let me attend thee. Go not thou alone:
Let me too share thy dangers and thy fate.
For we are one. What is thy pain, thy lot,
Is also mine. Never shall chance of war
Separate us: nor leave behind in grief,
In unknown miseries, part of thyself!
Pity me: quit me not in agony.
Near thee, I can console thee in distress
(Sweet office!), and beside thee patient wait
To cheer thee in fatigue, lull thee to rest,
When the winds howl and dangers glare around.
For tho' when absent from thee, I am weak
And womanish, yet near thee I am bold,
Constant, serene in danger, and reflect
Back on thyself a ray of thine own spirit.

V. 1135—1164.

Joyful I share thy pains, howe'er severe,
And ev'n to perish, yet with thee 'twere sweet."

V. 1165—1194.

So saying, o'er him tenderly she hung,
While to relieve her throbbing heart, her eyes
Silent o'erflow'd with pearly drops. She look'd
(As o'er him bent her lovely form) most like
Heav'n's beauteous bow what time the sadden'd skies
Distil their showers, fair-glitt'ring in the beams
Of the opposing sun. Her soon the King,
Fond looking in her count'nance, thus address'd.

" Loveliest of women, excellent as dear,
I feel thy noble soul exalt my own,
While thy affection melts me and subdues.
Thy gentle accents wake within my heart
The husband, father, brother; that almost
Love, pity, rev'rence of thyself, and these
Thy darling offspring, shake me to forego
My purpos'd resolution, and resign
My destin'd task to some inferior hand.
But no! be all thyself. Let no vain fears,
No weak foreboding of too tender love,
Unnerve thy wonted calmness. Let thy sons
Inherit from their mother, England's Queen,
A fix'd and valiant heart. Urge me no more
To quit th' attempt of an imperious task,
Prompted by duty, big with high'st design.
England now calls me from the fields of fight
To guide her infant navy, and defend

On her own element her sacred shores
From swarms of fierce-invading, Pagan foes.
Shall England's King shrink back, or stand aghast, V. 1193—1223.
Withdrawing from the combat, till his land
Sound with the shouts of robbers unoppos'd?
Shall England's Queen withhold him, if he dares
Forbid th' approach of these marauding hordes,
But coping with them on the open main
Ingulf them there, ere yet their bloody steps
Pollute a grass or flow'r of his fair isle?
No! I must go, and like a man; a King;
Not bearing thee associate, tho' most dear.
I go, and with heav'n's blessing will perform
Th' exalted charge assign'd me. Yes! I feel
My heart assures me conquest, and the aid,
The arm of heav'n in its own cause. Ere long
I shall return repaid with victory,
And honour, presage of yet future triumph,
When England's sons, inspirited, shall chase
From off the bosom of their wounded land
These furious, foreign wolves, that drain her blood.
Then order, peace, and happiness shall come
In graceful train, and hand in hand dispense
Their genial influence into ev'ry home.
Now should I even fall, my death would prove
A high example to all England's sons,
Rather to perish than to live base slaves.
Millions of warriors would spring up to fill
My place, in valour equal, firm, resolv'd,
Unconqu'rable as united: who should then
Place England's glory on eternal base."—

He paus'd a moment, then from his high thoughts
Relaxing, on his family around
Gaz'd, and thus added in more tender tone.

" Nor then, would you, dear treasures of my soul,
Me lost, be widow'd, orphan'd, comfortless.
That gracious Being, who the unfledg'd bird
Feeds, and each houseless tenant of the plain;
Who nurtures ev'ry flow'r that decks the field;
Would be to you a better father, friend,
And comforter, and as he knows you good,
In ev'ry peril would defend you all,
And give you hope and solace, born of heav'n.
Trust then to that kind Providence, whose eye
Looks over all its works, and must protect
The favor'd virtuous with peculiar care.
Of me a tender memory you still
Would cherish, mingled with a noble pride
That in my country's cause I bravely fell.—
But hence that painful picture; which I see
Softens thy soul afresh and from those eyes
Renews their current of too tender drops.
For rest assur'd; I shall return to share
Thy lov'd society for many years.
England shall be releas'd from all her foes;
Then will we fondly rear this blooming train,
And teach them to be noble-minded, brave,
And good, till seeing our own youth renew'd
In them, our country happy in its peace,
Blessing, and blest, along the vale of life

We will descend; old age by slow degrees
Shall bend us and one grave embrace us both.
Meanwhile, me absent, thou shalt safe remain
Apart from danger and grim scenes of war
Within a shelter'd castle, whither soon
With meet escort thou and thy train shall part.
There at each setting day and dawning morn
Think of me absent, as I will of thee,
And pour a fervent orison to heav'n.
Be mindful of thyself and this lov'd flock,
And calm expect unclouded hours of joy."

He ended here. The Queen awhile remain'd
Vacant of speech; at last with softer voice
Brief she rejoin'd. "Alas! this infant flock
Will ever to my gloomy thoughts present
Their father absent, and thy widow'd sister
Remind me what myself may soon become.—
Forgive my weakness, dearest love: but sure
Prophetic fears now agitate my soul,
That with unwont alarm is all-awake,
Doubting I never shall behold thee more.
Oft have I seen thee march to war, and oft
Return all pale with honourable wounds,
Yet never felt I fear. But now oh! now—
Something within me to my thought reveals
Horrid events, and that thyself must—What?—
Oh! dreadful image—Hence—I'll not believe—
It cannot be—No—I will be myself,
And dissipate these fancies.—Go my love,

My ever honour'd lord! Against her foes
Be still thy country's shield. I will implore
Comfort and hope from heav'n, and till my eyes
Again feast on thee, still believe the best."

She said, and proud with fortitude assum'd
Stood firm: yet soon rememb'ring she must part
Approach'd her husband, and her lovely face
Soft-folding in her robe, hung o'er his neck
Silent. He gently clasp'd her to his breast,
And unprevented on her fragrant lips
Impress'd a kiss, lingering as zephyr sleeps
Within the dewy bosom of a rose.
Returning tenderness half bade her tongue
Still urge his stay, but honour in her soul
And dignity forbade. Yet eloquent
In silence, ev'ry gesture spoke. Her heart
Throbb'd high, and spite of effort, flutt'ring sighs
Betray'd the secret tumult of her breast.
Long thus she linger'd in her husband's arms
With unavailing fondness. Often he
Gently repell'd her, and with whisper'd words
Check'd her emotion. Lovelier then she shone
Than wont: tho' graceful ever, now her mien
Of tender grief had heighten'd ev'ry charm.
As when May, flow'ry-vested, scatters show'rs
O'er the green meads, the transient rains disperst,
All nature smiles in beauty: cowslips bend
Their spotted bosoms on the pearly grass:
The landscape shines in beams of soften'd gold:

With azure smoothness glide the streams along:
Sweet breathes the air: the groves with music ring.

V. 1511—1538.

While these soft cares employ him, to the King
Hianfrid is announc'd. The youthful thane
Brooding resentment that no public praise
Had yet extoll'd his mean-deserving deeds,
Still under friendship's specious mask conceal'd
Hate, vain ambition, envy, treach'rous guile.
Receiv'd, with meek submission his request
He offers, with due escort to conduct
To Anselm's quiet halls the royal train.
Thus speaks he. "Royal chief, thy memory
Perhaps recalls, I sav'd thy sister once,
When Amund led to unexpected war
His foremost troops, and on the final rear
Vented his horrid rage. Still let me prove
My ardor in thy service. Let me lead
With escort meet of military state
To Anselm's friendly home the regal train.
So shalt thou know them safe, and I discharge
A pleasing duty, envied of my peers."

His ready care the monarch, ever prone
To palliate error past, accepts; and bids
Haste his design'd attendance. Soon array'd
The sov'reign his reluctant family
Prepares to leave, and many times farewel
To each repeating, quits them as a brook
That wanders murm'ring thro' a vale, and leaves

Flow'rs blooming on his banks, whose modest grace
In many a rural dell his moisture feeds.

V. 1339—1367.

Delay is none. A small attendant train
Selecting, strait the royal hero joins
The naval messenger, with whom intent
On his high expedition now he leaves
The camp: not unaccompanied awhile
Of other noble chiefs, honouring his steps.
Him, passing thus, the conscious host salutes
With acclamation, blessings on th' emprize,
And pray'rs for his return. The female throng
Mark his departing train with equal hope
And tenderer emotion. There the Queen
Long present stood, and watch'd the glimm'ring band
Gradual recede from sight; as dewy mists
Sail o'er the country, when the shepherd stands
Posted on some green height, and views their forms
Rolling away, till the dim mountains seem
Like islands rising from a fleecy sea.
Full soon herself with her domestic charge
The Thane Hianfrid waits, with escort meet
To bear to Anselm's halls. Nor less amid
The gen'ral camp, a noble female train
Prepares to leave the post, and seek awhile
Some not unknown retreat, as choice invites
Or safety dictates. Many a chieftain's tent
Presents a busy scene, while the griev'd wives,
Matrons, and virgins, quit with fond farewel
Their dear relations. So a beauteous crowd,

All with meet guard accompanied, departs.
A sigh of fond regret their course pursues,
Mingled with hope. Such seem'd their graceful pomp, V. 1368—1385.
While led by their fair Queen, the splendid train,
Gradual, majestic, from the view retires,
As fades the beauty of the western skies
At eve, what time at first an ample globe
Of gold, the sun amid the burnish'd clouds
Sits thron'd, yet reddening, broadening, as he slow
Descends, the clouds to deep'ning purple change,
Crimson, or fainter gold, and all on high
White, airy fleeces streak the azure vault,
Till when he final sets, grey twilight spreads
Her equal shade around, and Night at last
Under th' embrace of his dark mantle hides
Ev'ry green hill, and vale, and silent tree.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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